Sacred Thresholds

Religions in the Graeco-Roman World

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Sacred Thresholds

The Door to the Sanctuary in Late Antiquity

Edited by

Emilie M. van Opstall



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General Introduction

Emilie M. van Opstall

…
I knock at the stone's front door.
'It's only me, let me come in.
I hear you have great empty halls inside you,
unseen, their beauty in vain,
soundless, not echoing anyone's steps.
Admit you don't know them well yourself.'

'Great and empty, true enough,' says the stone,
'But there isn't any room.
Beautiful, perhaps, but not to the taste
of your poor senses.
You may get to know me but you'll never know me through.
My whole surface is turned toward you,
all my insides turned away.'
…
I knock at the stone's front door.
'It's only me, let me come in.'
'I don't have a door,' says the stone.

From 'Conversation with a stone'
BY WISŁAWA SZYMBORSKA[1]

∴

Persons entering a sacred space—whether it is a temple, a church or a natural site, such as a grove or a cave—are able to feel that they encounter a divine presence. Their experience can encompass wonder, aesthetic enjoyment or mystical rapture. These feelings have been variously described: as the

1 From: *Poems New and Collected: 1957–1997*, translated by S. Baranczak and C. Cavanagh, San Diego (1998).

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experience of 'the sublime' (Burke 1757) or 'the numinous' (Otto 1923), or as an emotion provoked by 'hierophany' (an act of divine power reaching into human life, Eliade 1965 and Borgeaud 1994). They are also explained by the fact that a sacred place is always what Smith refers to as a 'storied place' connected to a culturally important narrative (Smith 2008).

The present book aims to elucidate the transition from the worldly to the divine by focussing on doors leading to spaces considered to be holy in Late Antiquity. In 'pagan'[2] as well as in Christian sanctuaries, doors on different levels marked boundaries, whether physical or symbolic: gateways in a precinct; outer doors of a temple or church; inner doors of a *cella* or holy of holies. Some were plain and simple, others were monumental and lavishly decorated. Both pagans and Christians have recorded their experiences of these liminal spaces in literature, giving us a glimpse of how they perceived them.

Late Antiquity is a crossroad of traditional and new religious ideas and experiences. Its pluriformity requires an interdisciplinary as well as a diachronic approach. In the context of the present book on the experience of transition from the profane to the sacred during this period, the following type of questions play a role: what did entrances to pagan or Christian sanctuaries in Late Antiquity look like? To what extent were they modelled upon other sacred architecture? What was their function? What was their symbolic meaning? What did the crossing of a sacred threshold mean on sensory, emotive and intellectual levels? What continuities or changes can be found during a period in which cultural paradigms were redefined by the spread of Christianity? Where do 'polytheism' and 'monotheism' meet?

To answer such questions, one needs to combine various academic fields. In the first place, (the remains of) actual buildings as well as their immediate cultural context have to be examined, using various types of sources, material and textual. Moreover, the historical developments that might have influenced these experiences should be studied, especially in the religious domain. Since we often possess only scant evidence, a comparative approach can help to illuminate patterns of experiences—whether these experiences are material (physical objects), mental (a transition as a cognitive experience, involving perception, imagination, memory and emotion), religious (liturgical or spiritual, including an altered state of consciousness) or social (experiences shared by people within their social roles).

The chapters of the present book, therefore, examine one particular phenomenon in different regions of the Mediterranean and in various periods.

2 In this book, the word 'pagan' is used for 'non-Christian' without any negative connotation. See Cameron (2011) 14–32 for a discussion of the term 'pagan'.

Together, they offer an interdisciplinary picture of a highly complex period in history. They do not, of course, aim to reconstruct 'the' experience of crossing the threshold of a pagan or Christian sanctuary in Late Antiquity, but rather to discuss the full range of factors that could possibly have shaped such experiences. Hopefully, this method will generate new ideas and open up new perspectives.

The title of the volume itself already contains a sign of continuity as well as change: the word 'sanctuary' is used in a broad sense for a pagan sacred place of cult, as well as in the narrow sense for the Christian inner sanctuary. Specialists in the field of Classical Antiquity usually interpret the word 'sanctuary' as a sacred place of a cult (a *temenos* allotted to a deity and delimited by boundary markers: a grove, a cave, a shrine, a precinct containing a temple, or the temple itself), while experts in the field of Christian religion generally interpret 'sanctuary' as the 'inner sanctuary' of a church, the 'holy of holies', the separate place around the altar where the Eucharist is celebrated. The Christian holy of holies is modelled upon the Holy of Holies of the Jerusalem Temple. However, the Eucharist itself, a bloodless sacrifice around the altar inside the church, does not reflect the ritual practice of the time of the Jerusalem Temple, where animal sacrifices were performed by Jewish priests in front of the temple building (comparable to the pagan sacrificial custom). The Eucharist is closer to the Jewish liturgy practiced in the synagogue before and after the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE, which did not include animal sacrifice. During Late Antiquity, there was a similar spiritualisation of the idea of sacrifice among the pagan philosophical elite.[3]

The Broader Historiography of the Topic

Sacred space and religious experience have been popular topics for quite some time now, but doors of sanctuaries as places of transition in Late Antiquity have not yet been investigated in an interdisciplinary way. This volume for the first time brings together Archaeology and Religious Studies, History and Art History, Philosophy, Philology and Epigraphy to explore the theme of sacred doors in various regions of the Mediterranean in Late Antiquity. Contributions on doors of sanctuaries in the late antique Greek East and Latin West are flanked by contributions on earlier and later periods to highlight continuities and changes. Although the contributions are not all encompassed by a single dominant theoretical framework, several theoretical concepts are frequently

3 Stroumsa (2005) 103–144.

used, such as liminality, space, experience and emotion. I will briefly sketch the general outline of the most important discussions in the field of these theoretical concepts (see (a)–(c) below), linking these to recent developments relevant to this volume.

(a) ***Liminality***

The first concept that springs to mind when thinking about gates and thresholds is 'liminality'—from the Latin *limen*, threshold. Arnold Van Gennep, in his seminal anthropological study on *rites de passage*, uses this concept to describe phases of vital change in ritual societies, such as the change from boyhood to manhood.[4] *Rites de passage* are divided into three phases. A *rite de séparation* first separates a group from society. Then a *rite de marge* deprives the members of this isolated group of their previous identity. Since they are not yet in possession of their future role in society, they find themselves in an intermediate stage without rules, ('betwixt and between', as Victor Turner later referred to it[5]). At this liminal stage, their existential parameters are being affected: they have nothing, yet everything is possible. The symbolic liminal stage is intimately linked with the physical spatial transition through a 'neutral' zone between two territories, marked by for example a stone, a threshold, portal, or, in the case of sanctuaries the *pronaos*, the narthex or the vestibule. 'Whoever passes from one to the other finds himself physically and magico-religiously in a special situation for a certain length of time: he wavers between two worlds.'[6] Finally, through a *rite d'agrégation*, the group is accepted back into society with a new status.

The polysemic term 'liminality' has not only been applied to phases of vital change, but also to other situations of spatial as well as temporal transition.[7] It has been used (and abused) in both a literal and metaphorical sense. I will mention two famous instances in which the idea of the threshold plays a central role. The first is Walter Benjamin's unfinished historical-philosophical *Passagen-werk* written during the years 1927–1940 (translated in English as 'The Arcades Project').[8] Walter Benjamin was drawing on the concept of liminality when he coined the terms 'Schwellenzauber' (threshold-magic),

4 Van Gennep (1909). For a recent anthropological adaptation of Van Gennep's concept of liminality, see for example Bloch (1992) 6.

5 Turner (1967).

6 English translation of Van Gennep (1909) 18.

7 Among others by Leach (1976), in the context of this book see especially chapter 7, 'The symbolic ordering of a man-made world: boundaries of social space and time.'

8 Benjamin (1983) 283, 617, 147 respectively. See also Menninghaus (1986).

'Schwellenerfahrungen' (threshold-experiences) and 'Schwellenkunde' (the art of thresholds) to describe the spatial and temporal experience of the urban landscapes of Paris and Berlin. The second is Gérard Genette's *Seuils* (translated as 'Paratexts: thresholds of interpretation'),[9] in which the concept of liminality is applied to paratexts, i.e. textual material such as the cover, a dedication or a preface surrounding a main text and guiding its interpretation by the reader. An inscription at the entrance of a temple or church could be seen as a kind of hybrid 'paratext', a liminal text not written to guide the interpretation of a main text but of a sacred building.

In this volume, the concept of liminality is applied to doors to sanctuaries as transitional spaces between different spheres. The various dimensions discussed above, spatial, temporal and metaphorical, are all evoked. Doorways functioned as physical passages from the profane and the sacred (and back), with thresholds demarcating boundaries in between and with doors that excluded and included. The spatial transition from the profane to the sacred was often divided into zones of gradually increasing (or decreasing) sanctity—for example a *via sacra*, monumental staircases leading up to gates in a precinct, a courtyard or atrium, a *pronaos* in front of a temple and a vestibule or narthex in front of a church. Usually there were basins or fountains with purifying water to cleanse oneself or wash away one's sins in order to access the next phase. The crossing of liminal space brought a person into a liminal state, out of the ordinary, no longer fully part of the profane sphere and not yet part of the divine sphere. Often spatial and temporal liminality coincided, especially when the architectural space was used for rituals, such as processions. The imagery of sacred gateways, doors and thresholds was also used in a metaphorical sense to describe the preliminary phases paving the way to esoteric knowledge or preparing for a spiritual encounter with the divine.

The liminal function of doors or vestibules in sacred spaces during Late Antiquity has been investigated in various studies on Early Christianity, especially in cases where monumental church doors are still extant, such as the magnificent doors of the Sant' Ambrogio in Milan or the Santa Sabina in Rome. Jean-Michel Spieser wrote several important publications on church doors and their place in the spatial organisation of the Early Christian church (e.g. 'Réflexions sur le décor et les fonctions des portes monumentales'; 'Portes, limites et organisation de l'espace dans les églises paléochrétiennes'; 'Le programme iconographique des portes de Sainte-Sabine').[10] Most studies on sacred space focus either on the archaeological reconstruction or on the art

9 Genette (1987), esp. chapter 6 on dedications and inscriptions and chapter 7 on epigraphs.

10 Spieser (2009), (1995) and (1991) respectively.

historical interpretation of elements of one particular church. To continue with the example of the Santa Sabina, Ivan Foletti and Manuele Gianandrea, in their recent book *Zona liminare. Il nartece di Santa Sabina a Roma, la sua porta e l'iniziazione cristiana*,[11] have offered a reconstruction of the vestibule of the Santa Sabina in Rome, paying (albeit minimal) attention to its liminal function; while Allyson Everingham Sheckler and Mary Joan Winn Leith, in their article 'The Santa Sabina Acclamation Panel Once Again: Reading from the Inside Out', concentrate on the iconographical interpretation of the carvings on the monumental door of the same church.[12] The present book, while making use of numerous existing studies on doors to sanctuaries in various fields from the Greek and Roman world (see bibliography), adopts a different kind of approach. It brings together views on liminality from different disciplines that usually do not work closely together and provides the necessary historical background against which liminality in Late Antiquity can be interpreted.

(b) *Space*

The famous 'spatial turn' in the Humanities produced a profusion of studies on space in general and sacred space in particular. Major theorists in the field include amongst others Gaston Bachelard (with his '*espace vécu*'), Henri Lefebvre (who proposes a tripartite division of space in perceived, conceived and lived space), Michel Foucault (who coined the term 'heterotopia') and Yuri Lotman (on culturally defined spatial oppositions).[13] For this volume on sacred space, Emile Durkheim's and Mircea Eliade's distinction between the sacred and the profane is especially relevant.[14] The transition between the sacred and the profane is often expressed by the image of a door (e.g. the doors of heaven), a portal through which man can symbolically ascend or come into contact with divinity, while divinity can descend to earth. Although I am aware that the distinction between the sacred and the profane as an operative concept has been questioned,[15] the contributions in the present book on sanctuary doors do not aim to defend or challenge this distinction, but rather to show how these transitions actually worked by studying primary sources, both archaeological and textual in nature.

Many studies on sacred space in Late Antiquity concern the rise of Christianity. Some authors focus exclusively on the shaping of the Christian

11 Foletti and Gianandrea (2015).

12 Everingham Sheckler and Winn Leith (2016).

13 Bachelard (1957); Lefebvre (1974); Foucault (1984); Lotman (1990).

14 Durkheim (1912) and Eliade (1965).

15 Borgeaud (1994).

religion, such as Ann Marie Yasin in her *Saints and Church Spaces in the Late Antique Mediterranean. Architecture, Cult, and Community*[16] or Johannes Hahn, Stephen Emmel and Ulrich Gotter's *From Temple to Church. Destruction and Renewal of Local Cultic Topography in Late Antiquity*.[17] Others approach sacred spaces in Late Antiquity from a broader perspective, either as part of pilgrimage, e.g. David Frankfurter on *Pilgrimage and Holy Space in late antique Egypt*[18] or within a comparative study of space in general, as is the case in Lavan, Swift and Putzeys' *Objects in Context, Objects in Use: Material Spatiality in Late Antiquity*,[19] or Juliette Day (and others)'s *Spaces in Late Antiquity, Cultural, Theological and Archaeological Perspectives*.[20]

Recently, the general emphasis in studies on sacred space has shifted to the question of how architectural space and ritual action interact. Sacred architecture regulates movement and shapes experience. Within this architecture liminal spaces play an important role in constructing ceremony and function: the *via sacra* as a processional route, the courtyard as a halting place, the alignment of various entrances to direct the flow of the faithful. A good example of the interaction of space and ritual action is an article by Joan Branham, 'Penetrating the Sacred—Breaches and Barriers in the Jerusalem Temple',[21] dealing with barriers and sanctity within the Jewish religious system. The Jerusalem Temple is often seen as an implicit or explicit model for Christian churches and the Temple Veil as a portent of Christian theological meaning. Since Branham's article provides relevant interdisciplinary background for the contributions with a Christian subject matter in the present book, I will briefly summarize it here. Her investigation of the Jerusalem Temple's sacred barriers begins with literary *topoi* that correlate sanctity and figurative fences in ancient Israel. She then examines both archaeological and textual evidence that illuminates the actual collection of screening devices at various junctures in the Temple's precincts, with different degrees of permeability. Literally dozens of gateways, walls and dividers worked together to circumscribe a specific centre in the Jerusalem Temple. The dividers discussed in Branham's article carried the greatest symbolic weight in generating overlapping categories such as sacred space, gendered space, sacrificial space and divine space, 'pure' and 'impure'. Following the experiential path of first century Jews coming to worship

16 Yasin (2009).
17 Hahn, Emmel and Gotter (2008).
18 Frankfurter (1998).
19 Lavan, Swift and Putzeys (2007).
20 Day, Hakola, Kahlos and Tervahauta (2016).
21 Branham (2006).

in Jerusalem, her discussion begins with the liminal function of the *miqveh*, the ritual immersion pool immediately outside the entrance, and ends with the Holy of Holies, announced by a single permeable Veil and only accessible to the high priest. In the final space, which completes the spatial system of absolute sacralisation by utter dematerialisation, only the 'name' of God exists. Moving through the Temple from the outside to the inside, there seems to be an inverse relationship between sanctity and substance: while the gradations of sanctity increase, the structural substance decreases.

The interaction between space and ritual from Antiquity to Byzantium is dealt with in various recent books, for example the excellent volume edited by Wescoat and Ousterhout's *Architecture of the Sacred: Space, Ritual and Experience from Classical Greece to Byzantium*.[22]

In Byzantine studies, the notion of 'hierotopy' was introduced by Alexei Lidov.[23] The term refers to the conscious and creative organization of sacred space, involving a range of different media (architecture, icons, light, sound, etc.). In the context of this book, the term is best illustrated with a brief discussion of the curtain at the door to Byzantine inner sanctuaries (*katapetasma*). This curtain played an important role in the Judeo-Christian tradition. It goes back to the Veil of the Jerusalem Temple and symbolizes the incarnation of Christ as the most direct way into heaven. It was a powerful vehicle of visual culture and iconic imagery, a so-called 'image-paradigm'—i.e. an image that is visible and recognizable, but at the same time not formalized in any fixed state, whether in a form of a pictorial scheme or in a mental construction. The image-paradigm of the Temple Veil was not connected with the illustration of any specific text, but it was part of a continuum of literary and symbolic meanings and associations which determined the imagery of all doors to Byzantine sanctuaries.[24] The *katapetasma* of Hagia Sophia, which has been reconstructed on the basis of a variety of different sources, was the most striking embodiment of this vision. It was venerated simultaneously as ideal boundary (the image of Christ as Door), as pattern of all icons and as holy relic.[25] The notions of 'hierotopy' and 'image-paradigm' are closely linked with experience and emotions, discussed below.

22 Wescoat and Ousterhout (2012).

23 See e.g. Lidov (2014a).

24 See Lidov (2010) 87–94.

25 See Lidov (2014b) 42–56.

(c) *Emotion and Experience*

In the field of Classical Studies, emotions and cognitive psychology have recently become popular topics. Studies on love, desire, joy, hope, fear, pity, grief, disgust, anger, horror abound. The volume *Unveiling emotions: sources and methods for the study of emotions in the Greek world* by Angelos Chaniotis and *Unveiling emotions II: emotions in Greece and Rome: texts, images, material culture* by Angelos Chaniotis and Pierre Ducrey both cover a wide range of emotions in Antiquity, discussing sources and offering methods.[26] In the chapter 'Emotions and Archaeological Sources: A Methodological Approach', Jane Masséglia stresses the importance of archaeological space for the study of emotions. As the material manifestation of immaterial phenomena, archaeological space offers an opportunity to understand codes of behaviour:

> The archaeologist faced with … material remains such as a city gate or a temenos wall, is in fact presented with evidence for where one code of behaviour finished (or in other words where one *emotional context* ended) and another began. These liminal zones, in particular, are of great interest in the study of emotions in antiquity since they are frequently marked, even lavishly decorated, so as to exploit the emotional drama inherent in designated transformative spaces.[27]

She strongly argues for an interdisciplinary approach in the study of emotions, either historical, combining material remains and textual evidence, or comparative, looking for patterns of occurrence.

In the case of research on the door to the sanctuary as a place of transition, various concepts from cognitive psychology[28] are relevant. When someone enters a sacred space, perception, pattern recognition, attention, consciousness and memory work together. Let us imagine ourselves entering a church, whether we are faithful or not. We perceive and interpret sensory signals as elements of complex patterns: we recognize the church door as a divider between two places of a different nature; our interpretation of the space we are about to enter is guided by the decoration around the door or the inscription on its lintel; we are reminded of religious or social duties by the beggar holding up his empty hand. The amount of attention we pay to our surroundings and the conscious awareness of our circumstances determine our experience.

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26 Chaniotis (2012) and Chaniotis and Ducrey (2013). See also Cairns and Fulkerson (2012) and Cairns and Nelis (2017).

27 Masséglia (2012) 136.

28 See for example Neisser (2014).

There is a difference between the making the sign of the cross as routine ritual and entering a church in a solemn funerary procession. The threshold not only functions as a spatial boundary but also as an 'event-boundary' in the mind. Research in cognitive psychology has shown that events which occur before one crosses a threshold are compartmentalized and filed away as a memory. The 'doorway effect', as Radvanksy calls it, can change a mindset.[29] As such, a threshold to a sanctuary can change a mind-set, facilitating the transition from the profane to the sacred.

New approaches to the study of religious experience focus on individual experience and emotion. *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Emotion* gives an overview of various methods employed to study religious emotions, some of them hypermodern,[30] perhaps the most striking being an article by Robert Roberts, 'Emotions research and religious experience', describing an experiment with a Tibetan Buddhist monk. A radioactive dye was inserted into his brain while he was meditating. The dye showed reduced activity in the parietal lobe, thus demonstrating the place where the 'loss of the self' (also called 'oceanic feeling') is situated and individuating it as a neurological phenomenon. Unfortunately (or should I rather say: fortunately?), these kinds of practical experiments in the field of cognitive neuroscience are not applicable to monks from Late Antiquity. Nevertheless, if we assume that emotions are basically universal human phenomena, results from modern research can be projected back onto persons from the past and vice versa—such as, for example, the observation that religious emotions usually come in bundles and can be divided into standard emotion types: joy, sorrow, fear, gratitude, hope, anger, awe, reverence, compassion, contrition, hatred; or the observation that emotions are influenced by culturally determined associations (context and language).[31]

Several recent studies of texts and practices, among others *The Individual in the Religions of the Ancient Mediterranean* by Jörg Rüpke, emphasize the individual experience of religion in Antiquity.[32] In Late Antiquity, the divine manifested itself to groups or individuals in many ways—during offering rituals, liturgy and divination, by dreams, incubation and miracles—and naturally could cause intense emotions, as is testified by numerous vivid descriptions of

29 Radvansky (2012). See Christina Williamson in the present volume (chapter 11).

30 Corrigan (2007).

31 Roberts (2007).

32 Rüpke (2013), see also Rüpke and Spickermann (2012), Rüpke (2016), Flannery e.a. (2008).

encounters with the divine.[33] Epiphanies were partly institutionalised by their location in space and time. In temples the gods could show themselves in the entrance of the *cella* when the doors were opened, while in churches the divine presence was felt during the Eucharist in the inner sanctuary, the altar.[34] The importance traditionally attached to such encounters can also be inferred by the existence of technical devices artificially creating the appearance of a divine epiphany. There is evidence for mechanisms provoking 'coups de théâtre' (also called 'door-opening miracles') in the Greek and Jewish world.[35] Hero of Alexandria, for example, a Greek mathematician and engineer from the first century CE, described a hydraulic machine by which temple doors opened automatically when a fire on the altar was lit.[36] It is not known whether these machines were actually used, but one can imagine the stunning effect they could have had on the onlookers. In another instance, a recent reconstruction of the Jewish Temple by Netzer and Laureys cites a passage from the Mishnah describing a narrow gangway in the wall separating the Vestibule from the Sanctuary. The entrance itself was formed by a gap with two sets of doors: one pair led from the Vestibule to the gap, and another led from the gap to the Sanctuary. Gatekeepers would walk through the secret corridor, enter the gap between the two sets of doors and open them while remaining hidden. 'This set-up gave the people the illusion that the doors were opened from within the Temple'—thus creating a similar door-opening miracle.[37]

Religious experience has also become a favourite topic in Byzantine studies. The idea of 'multisensory aesthetics' departs from the idea that sacred space was designed to turn people into active participants undergoing a 3D-experience. According to many Byzantine texts, crossing the threshold of a church meant stepping into heaven in miniature. Bissera Pentcheva tries to imitate this immersion in liturgical sound and light in Hagia Sophia at Constantinople by using modern techniques.[38]

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33 In mystery cults, closeness to the presence of the divine was possibly evoked through the re-enactment of mythological narrative, a practice proposed by Lucinda Dirven (2015) for the worship of Mithras.

34 Some recent studies on epiphany are e.g. Johnston and Struck (2005) (divination), Platt (2011) (classical examples of various types), Denysenko (2012) (Eastern liturgy), Ivanovici (2016) (architecture and the manipulation of epiphany).

35 Weinreich (1929).

36 Hero of Alexandria, *Pneumatica* 37 (with a lot of other special effects, such as mechanical trumpet sounds produced on the opening of temple doors, see 37.17).

37 Netzer and Laureys (2008), esp. p. 148.

38 Pentcheva (2011) and (2017) (not seen).

The Contributions in this Volume

An interdisciplinary conference in 2015 on 'The Door of the Sanctuary: a place of transition' preceded this volume.[39] During the lively discussions between the participants from various academic fields it struck me that the word 'interdisciplinarity' was never used: it was simply there. Each contribution came from a different discipline—Archaeology, History, Art History, Theology, Classics, Byzantine Studies—and provided a complementary perspective. Together, they offered a remarkably rich picture of the door to the sanctuary as a place of transition in the past. Sitting around a round table, all were interested in the theme and eager to learn from each other. I hope that the contributions presented in this volume will have a similar effect on the reader, arousing his or her interest to know more and to continue research in the field. Its chapters are organized in four thematic parts, each consisting of two to four chapters: part 1—Experiencing Sacred Thresholds, part 2—Symbolism and Allegory of Sanctuary Doors, part 3—Messages in Stone, and part 4—The Presence of the Divine.

Part 1—Experiencing Sacred Thresholds

The chapters of the first part of this volume concern the experience of visitors who enter a temple or a church and are confronted with various thresholds or barriers. They focus on ritual movement over thresholds and examine the interaction of spatial and symbolic systems in various sacred spaces of late antique Christianity in the Latin West and the Greek East.

The first chapter, 'On the Threshold', was written by me as editor. It is a case study meant to serve as an opening chapter to the volume as a whole. With this interdisciplinary exploration of a poem and a building my intention is to offer the reader a paradigm for the various possible approaches to the theme of this volume: *Sacred Thresholds. The Door to the Sanctuary in Late Antiquity*. The starting point of this chapter is the *Ekphrasis of Hagia Sophia* written by Paul the Silentiary in the sixth century CE. With this poem as a guide, I take the reader on a tour of the actual church of Hagia Sophia (Holy Wisdom), built in the same century and still to be admired in the city of Istanbul today. Each mention of a church door in Paul's hexameters will be discussed in turn, with

39 Organised together with Sible de Blaauw on 27–29 May 2015 at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, thanks to funding by the KNAW (Koninklijke Nederlandse Academie voor Wetenschappen), the Faculty of Humanities of the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, the research schools HLCS of Radboud University Nijmegen and CLUE of the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, and OIKOS (Dutch National Research School for Classics).

special attention to the main entrance to Hagia Sophia, the so-called 'Imperial Doors', originally reserved for the emperor, the patriarch and their retinues. It is clear that apart from preparing the audience for an encounter with the divine, these doors also reveal how religious and political power are intertwined. A literary commentary accompanies each reference to a church door, followed by a digression addressing archaeological and cultural-historical issues. Adopting a comparative perspective, other ekphraseis and monuments are taken into account, both Christian and pagan. The aim of this chapter is to reconstruct the wide range of elements that could have shaped the experience of a person entering Hagia Sophia in the sixth century. What would someone entering this church have seen, heard, smelled, or felt? Who was excluded at the church gates, and who was admitted? What symbolic meaning did these doors have? Which continuities or changes can be identified regarding pagan religious culture?

In the second chapter, entitled 'Entering the Baptistery—Spatial, Identity and Salvific Transitions in Fourth and Fifth Century Baptismal Liturgies', Juliette Day concentrates on baptismal rites in Milan and Jerusalem. The entrance of candidates for baptism into the baptistery has generally been overlooked as simply a pragmatic preliminary action, but close attention to the rituals at the door described in catechetical instruction indicates that the physical and verbal rituals were enhanced by heightened emotional responses. Bishops responsible for explaining the theological and spiritual significance of the baptismal liturgy afterwards trusted that the rituals had indeed had a dramatic effect upon the candidates and drew upon their emotional and physical memory to implant authoritative interpretations of the event. Douglas J. Davies' connection between memory, emotion and identity in ritual efficacy is used to examine the rituals of entry into the baptisteries of Milan and Jerusalem at the end of the fourth or early fifth centuries described in the mystagogical catechesis of Ambrose and of Cyril or John of Jerusalem. These rites have a very similar ritual sequence, but the different locations of the baptisteries, and hence their doors, meant that rituals such as the renunciation and adherence occurred either outside the door (Jerusalem) or inside (Milan), and thus although the rituals could be described as liminal their location is clearly not always liminal. This has implications for the theological meaning of the rituals, as well as the emotional and intellectual appropriation of their meaning during and after the baptismal liturgy; above all these meanings derive from their embodied memory of the event.

The third chapter, 'From Taboo to Icon—The Entrance to and the Exit from the Church in the First Three Greek Liturgical Commentaries (ca 500–730 CE),' stays in the Greek East. Christian Boudignon, using the three liturgical

commentaries of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, Maximus the Confessor and Germanus of Constantinople, focusses on the meaning of entrances into the church or inside the church. There is no real agreement in those commentaries on what the 'first entrance' actually is—the descent of the high priest from the altar toward the space of the laity, the entrance of the high priest and laity from outside, or the entrance of the deacons with the book of the Gospel—and what it means. As regards the 'second entrance', the dismissal of catechumens from the church and the *taboo* attached to the doors play a very important role in Pseudo-Dionysius and Maximus, as a kind of scapegoat ritual that gives sanctity and unity to the remaining faithful. It also reshapes the space inside the church. As the ritual of the second entrance fades away in Germanus' time, the procession of the holy gifts receives more emphasis, from an *iconic* perspective.

The fourth chapter, 'Bonus Intra, Melior Exi!—Inside and outside incubation sanctuaries', concludes the first section. Ildikó Csepregi deals with the interaction between men and the divine during incubation practices (i.e. sleeping overnight for a kind of dream therapy) in the pagan as well as the Christian world, from the fifth century BCE to the sixth-seventh century CE. 'Pure must be he who enters the fragrant temple; purity means to think nothing but holy thoughts'—such was the inscription at the entrance of the Asclepieion at Epidaurus. The ancient Greek practice of sleeping inside the sanctuary of certain gods, especially Asclepius', was very popular and continued even after the rise of Christianity. The inscription at the Epidaurian entrance summarizes the internal preparation necessary to undergo the ritual. The ritual purity inside the sanctuary was in sharp contrast to the uncleanness of the sick worshippers. Incubation sanctuaries had a secluded hall for ritual sleep, the *abaton*, a place forbidden to enter. When patients underwent the ritual, the doors of the *abaton* were closed and locked. Incubation sanctuaries had another important boundary marking the *temenos*, the sanctuary area which excluded those, for example, who were dying or were to give birth, but admitted elements normally held unclean outside the sanctuary as part of the ritual cure. Ildikó Csepregi elaborates on the concepts related to the ritual cleanliness and *miasma* and discusses the recipients of miracles: the unclean, who had a special place within the cult site and benefitted from the miracle, and the transgressors, who by entering the sanctuary illegally had offended the deity of healer saint and were punished.

With the rise of Christianity, the pagan ritual was Christianized and the pagan deities were replaced by Christian incubation saints, such as Thecla, Cosmas and Damian, Cyrus and John or Artemius. The organisation of space as well as the conception of purity changed. Christian incubation was practiced

at specific times and places within churches, close to the tombs of saints. The author amply illustrates the Christian practice by using material from Early Byzantine miracle stories to show the importance of entering (and staying outside) the incubation space and the role of doors or other types of enclosures during incubation. Entering and leaving through the sanctuary door (the latter most often in a different physical condition: cured if one had benefited from a miracle or maimed if one had received a punishment) went hand in hand with the ritual-spiritual transformation of the *incubant*, who had undergone a religious experience that could even change their soul.

Part 2—Symbolism and Allegory of Sanctuary Doors

The second part of this volume is organized around the symbolic and allegorical meaning of sacred gateways in the East and in the West—in texts, architecture and decoration.

The opening chapter, 'Sanctuary Doors, Vestibules and *Adyta* in the Works of Neoplatonic Philosophers', is written by Lucia Tissi, who takes the reader from the experience of material thresholds to the meaning of metaphorical thresholds, focussing on thresholds related to philosophical initiation and indicating degrees of knowledge. The image of sanctuary doors was used to describe the subsequent phases towards wisdom in a didactical process of learning. The author discusses the adoption of the sanctuary door as a symbol in the cultural and philosophical context that has been labelled 'Neoplatonism'. Among Neoplatonists, the door has a specific initiatory value: it is interpreted as a division between different eschatological, gnoseological, deontological and eudemonistic levels. Furthermore, the symbol of the door has been adopted in *paideutic* contexts to articulate various degrees of knowledge. Firstly, Lucia Tissi focusses on some noteworthy expressions linked to sanctuaries and used as initiatory symbols by Neoplatonic philosophers, such as πύλαι or θύραι, πρόθυρα or ἄδυτον. Secondly, she investigates other related images such as 'the door of the soul' and 'the door of poetry'. In conclusion, she provides a sketch of the significance of the door imagery in Neoplatonic paideutic training.

The next two chapters, chapter five and six, deal with the late antique Latin world. In 'The Paradise of Saint Peter's', Sible de Blaauw explores the liminal role of the atrium for visitors entering St Peter's in Rome. The monumental forecourt of the Early Christian basilica of St Peter's in Rome, the largest church in Christendom throughout the Middle Ages, was called 'Paradise' from early medieval times onward. Sible de Blaauw investigates the background and significance of this metaphor. It suggests a specific kind of experience including a range of spiritual associations, linked with the act of approaching and entering the Vatican basilica in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages.

First, the display of architecture and decoration is examined for its potential to contribute to the paradisiacal notion. The fountain in the centre of the atrium courtyard, the tall shimmering façade mosaic, the colonnades, the marble paving and wall revetments, together with the five monumental portals of the basilica, must have given the atrium an air of preciousness and delicate harmony that cannot have escaped the perception of any visitor.

Above this concrete level of experience, a range of more abstract associations can be discerned. It is suggested that the specific orientation of the basilica and the circumstances of light in the atrium would have aroused a cosmological allusion to paradise. Moreover, the apocalyptical subject of the façade mosaic brought an iconographic theme into the atrium that included the central fountain, called *cantharus*. The fountain with its characteristic pinecone corresponded to the rivers of paradise and the four Gospels in the mosaic and thus effectuated an eschatological dimension. The thematic interchange between the fountain and the apocalyptic scenery of the façade, as well as the delightful architecture of the atrium, is echoed in some miniatures of Carolingian liturgical manuscripts. They evoke the paradisiacal and eschatological connotations of the atrium, and thus reflect the spiritual experience of the visitors entering the basilica.

In chapter seven, 'Imagining the Entrance to the Afterlife—Peter as the Gatekeeper of Heaven in Early Christianity', Roald Dijkstra interprets the symbolic role of Peter's keys in the visual arts and in poetry. He discusses the so-called *traditio clavium*, the handing of the keys of heaven by Jesus to Peter. This iconographic scene is visible on various sarcophagi of the late antique period. It is also described in late antique poetry.

First, the author discusses the well-known concept of the heavenly gates and the role of Matthew 16.18–19 as an essential biblical source for this idea among Christians. According to the text of the Gospel (16.19), Peter was given the keys of heaven. Although the gates of heaven are not mentioned explicitly, Peter's new role as a key-holder or gatekeeper presupposes the existence of such doors. This idea is also prepared in the previous verse of the same chapter (16.18), where the gates of the underworld are mentioned. Matthew 16.18–19 has become famous for its ecclesiastical implications regarding the position of the bishop of Rome. However, exegetical explanations of this passage vary.

More or less outside the theological domain, the passage was also referred to in the visual arts and in poetry. Roald Dijkstra uses both media to show the meaning of the keys and retrieve late antique conceptions of the entrance to heaven. It appears that in the visual arts the *traditio clavium* scene ('The handing over of the keys') is mainly depicted on sarcophagi carved in stone, with the key as the only clue to the interpretation of the image. In the closely

related *Dominus legem dat* scene ('The Lord hands over the Law'), on the other hand, references to heaven or paradise are present. In the *traditio clavium* scene, the keys are a symbol for the admission of the deceased to the afterlife, to which Peter, via intercession, could contribute. In poetry, the *traditio clavium* was elaborated especially in epic, with a focus on Peter's function as the gatekeeper of heaven. Over the course of time, other stories were associated to Matthew 16.19, in particular the story of Peter's liberation from prison. From gatekeeper of heaven, Peter's role shifted more and more to that of gatekeeper on earth too. Indeed, the poetic tradition proves to be more creative in dealing with the theologically charged passage from the New Testament than the visual domain.

Part 3—Messages in Stone

The third part of this volume gathers together several chapters on 'messages in stone' in the Greek and Roman world. The authors focus on epigraphical source material, whether in prose or in verse, around the entrance of temple or church doors, and elaborate upon their form and function. In all chapters, the form and function, the place and content, as well as the senders and recipients of the messages are taken into consideration.

Chapter eight examines the practice of writing inscriptions near the main entrance of a temple before Late Antiquity, offering interesting material for comparison with later periods. In 'The Queen of Inscriptions Contextualized—The Presence of Civic Inscriptions in the *Pronaos* of Ancient Temples in Hellenistic and Roman Asia Minor (fourth century BCE—second century CE)', Evelien Roels shows that the presence of inscriptions on temple buildings in general and in the area of the *pronaos* in particular seems to be a phenomenon that applies specifically to the sanctuaries in Hellenistic and Roman Asia Minor. Both in the coastal regions of Caria and Ionia, and in the more inland regions of Phrygia and Galatia, temples can be found whose walls were inscribed with a variety of official documents, turning them into *Schriftträger*. These documents show a large variety in type and content, ranging from letters of kings and magistrates to civic decrees concerning the polis itself or, to a lesser extent, regulations for the cult. What all these records have in common is their aspiration to display publicly the relevant events, privileges, rights and individuals publicly on the walls of the temple and, consequently, inside the sanctuary. Evelien Roels analyses the significance of the *pronaos* for the publication of documents, and addresses the way the presence of inscriptions changed the symbolic meaning of the *pronaos* and the temple as a whole. In addition, it provides a backdrop against which the use of writing at the entrance of the Early Christian church and later cult buildings can be interpreted.

It ultimately argues that the ancient temple fulfilled a multidimensional range of functions in a significant number of cities in Asia Minor, ranging from a religious and economical role to a monumental support for the publication of civic dossiers.

The ninth chapter, 'Versus *de Limine* and *in Limine*—Displaying Greek *Paideia* at the Entrance of Early Christian Churches', is written by Gianfranco Agosti. It deals with verse inscriptions at the entrances of churches from the late antique Eastern Mediterranean. It explores the form and function of a sample of texts in their historical context, focussing on their literary features as part of the more general strategy of Christianizing the civic space of late antique cities. After a brief sketch of the reception of the symbolism of doors in Greek Christian poetry of the fourth and fifth century CE (i.e. the highbrow literary background of the audiences that authors of inscriptions had to take into account), Gianfranco Agosti examines verse inscriptions from different areas and analyses the way in which they conveyed an ideological and literary message. He first discusses inscriptions with quotations from the Psalms, followed by metrical texts and inscriptions of higher and lower quality displaying rare classical words. Metrical inscriptions placed at the entrances of churches not only prepared the encounter between the believer and the church, or, in some cases, introduced the viewer to the beauty of the temple (the 'ekphrastic mode'), but they also re-enacted the defeat of paganism, both as religion and as culture (the 'ideological mode'). Displaying Greek *paideia* at the church entrance meant capturing the prestigious literary pagan tradition and transforming it into something radically different. Although such verse inscriptions, especially the highbrow-style poems, primarily addressed ideal readers able to understand their complex language, their pragmatic communicative function was not limited to the upper class. By reversing and transforming 'Homeric' diction as well as adopting the new diction of Christian poetry, they showed that the pagan *paideia* was defeated. Placed in the entrance, a highly symbolic liminal zone of churches, they were designed to shape the act of entering a church, a moment full of meaning to every worshipper. Read or unread, they conveyed time and again a sense of victory over the past, proclaiming the new world of Christian *paideia*.

Chapter ten, which concludes the section 'Messages in Stone', similarly discusses epigrams inscribed on the lintels of church doors, but this time in the late antique and early medieval Roman world. In 'The Door to the Sanctuary from Paulinus of Nola to Gregory of Tours—Enduring Characteristics and Evolutions from the Theodosian to the Merovingian period', Gaëlle Herbert de la Portbarré-Viard links architectural evidence and literary sources in verse and prose. She first explores the role of the door in early Christianity. As an

ambiguous architectural element, involving the notion of both opening and closing and controlling the access to the abode of the divine, with the rise of Christianity the door to the sanctuary acquires new spiritual significance in accordance with the new religion. Almost a century after the archetypical church descriptions of Eusebius of Caesarea, Paulinus of Nola, an aristocrat from Bordeaux and convert to ascetic Christianity, describes the monumental complex dedicated to Felix of Nola which he had enlarged, modified and restructured. He pays special attention to its doors in *Carmina* 27 and 28 and in *Letter* 32. Significant traces of the complex still exist on the site of Cimitile in Campania. Two centuries later, Gregory of Tours, like Paulinus a builder bishop, records in his *Historia Francorum* as well as in various hagiographical stories precious testimonies on religious buildings situated for the most part in Merovingian Gaul.

After summarizing the main architectural and symbolic meanings of the sanctuary doors in the œuvre of Paulinus of Nola and comparing them with the archaeological remains of the actual monumental complex, Gaëlle Herbert de la Portbarré-Viard examines what has become of this structural element of Christian buildings two centuries later in Gregory of Tours. Gregory lived in a completely different world, in which the function of sanctuary doors had changed and multiplied: they still demarcated a space of transition between the profane and the sacred, but concerned especially the space in which the *dynamis* (manifestation of powers) of saints operated, manifesting themselves through miraculous events such as healings. Moreover, the sanctuary door as presented by Gregory of Tours, sometimes violated or smashed down during political vicissitudes, is a sort of mirror of the Merovingian period.

Part 4—The Presence of the Divine

The papers in the final part of this volume are grouped around the theme of portals through which man enters into close contact with the divine. This theme serves to illustrate the differences as well as similarities between pagan temples and Christian churches.

'Filters of Light—Greek Temple Doors as Portals of Epiphany' by Christina Williamson takes the reader back in time to the Greek pagan world. It focusses on the accessibility and attractiveness of Greek temple doors as portals of epiphany, clearly showing that entrances to Greek temples and to churches aimed at similar effects. In the ancient Greek world contact with the divine was primarily regulated through the ritual of sacrifice and the exchange it represented. Temples were not essential to places of cult, but those that had them were clearly dominated by them and they lent prestige to their local communities. Once studied primarily for their exterior architecture and perfection of

design, temples are increasingly considered as integral to the ritual context of the Greek sanctuary. This extends to their interiors and the rituals that took place there—prayer, for example—and which revolved around the cult image. All of this makes the question of the role of their doorways especially pertinent. Christina Williamson briefly examines the function of Greek temples and the issue of how accessible they were to the public at large, as well as the general attraction of the entrance in relation to the cult image. Although the cult images were considered as 'works of art', they were at the same time imbued with the *energeia* of the divine. Doorways did much more than provide access—they illumined and framed the image, preparing the visitor for the epiphany. Concepts such as the 'doorway effect' and 'guided perception' are used to explore how this worked; two exceptional temples, the Knidian sanctuary of Aphrodite and the temple of Apollo at Didyma, further serve to highlight the pivotal role of doorways in the conception of the divine.

In the final chapter of the volume the perspective is reversed: here, the point of view is no longer that of man approaching the divine, but that of the divine approaching man. In 'The Other Door to the Sanctuary—The apse and divine entry in the early Byzantine church', Brooke Shilling concentrates on the portal through which the divine enters sacred space. Beginning in the sixth century, theophanies of Christ conveyed by a mandorla of light or cloud rendered the apse conch as a point of entry for the divine in the church. At the same time, alternative pictorial devices were developed to convey the presence of the Virgin Mary in the church and sanctuary.

The chapter focusses on two apse mosaics of the Virgin Mary from Cyprus. In the church of the Panagia Angeloktistos at Kiti, the footstool of the Virgin overlaps the lower decorative borders of the mosaic, creating the illusion that the Virgin and Child are hovering in the sanctuary. The same motif, albeit in less dramatic form, appears in the church of the Panagia tis Kyras at Livadia, where the Virgin stands alone in prayer. Brooke Shilling compares the optical illusion to a variety of miracles and apparitions in hagiographic and liturgical texts, including levitation miracles and visions of the divine entering the church during consecration rites. A second motif at Livadia, the imbricated scale pattern of the background, supports the theme of intercession by picturing the threshold between heaven and earth. Associated with common gates and screens, the scale pattern sets up a barrier between heaven and earth, which the Virgin crosses for the benefit of the Christian community.

Together, the projecting footstool and the scaled background denote the physical presence of the Virgin Mary in the church, while the visualized threshold evokes multiple metaphors of the Virgin as a door and a gate in

Byzantine homilies and hymns. Ultimately, such visions of the Virgin in the apse are explained by the association between the Eucharist and the Incarnation in Christian texts and by the desire to avoid the image of the divine Christ in the apse.

General Conclusions and Future Directions

The present book highlights the door to the sanctuary as a place of transition in Late Antiquity by placing side by side studies by experts from different academic fields. The four thematic parts aim to facilitate comparison between related contributions and to reveal patterns of experiences—whether these experiences are material, mental, religious or social. I hope, however, that readers of this volume may also come to unexpected insights by making their personal selection of the chapters according to their own interests. I will end this introduction with some general conclusions and suggestions of directions for further research.

The contributions in the first part on movement over sacred thresholds are based, on the one hand, on a wide range of literary sources (a panegyric for an inauguration ceremony, catechetical and liturgical texts, epigraphy and miracle stories), and on the other hand on different kinds of archaeological remains of sacred thresholds (in churches, baptisteries, pagan and Christian incubation sanctuaries). Each contribution shows how interaction between ritual and space shapes the experience of a person crossing a sacred threshold and entering a sacred space. Whether in a pagan or in a Christian context, various significant oppositions such as renunciation and adherence, admission and exclusion, purity and uncleanness play an important role. It is clear that the nature of the interaction between ritual and space depends to a certain degree on the particularities of each place and that it develops over time, combining traces of earlier practices with new customs.

The central theme of the second part is the symbolic and allegorical meaning of sanctuary doors, triggering associations and creating meaning. Sanctuary doors are important metaphors for intellectual as well as spiritual transition. In the didactic context of Neoplatonism, where the ascending levels of knowledge are visualised as a progressive penetration into a sanctuary, philosophy and theology intertwine on an intellectual level. The learning process is equated with initiation into mysteries. In sacred architecture and iconography, the symbolism connected to sanctuary doors contributes to a more complex theological programme. Concrete experiences of sacred doorways, whether

immersion in sacred space (the inner court of Saint Peter's) or observation of sacred decoration (Peter's keys on a sarcophagus), trigger a wide range of spiritual associations and are connected to a wider symbolic system.

It would be interesting to analyse the way in which this religious mindset works together with other mind-sets on a cognitive level. How does a person deal with different mind-sets at the same time? For example, in the third part on 'messages in stone', the inscriptions on temple and church entrances may not only have a religious meaning—as in the basilica of Paulinus of Nola—but can contain other messages as well: e.g. the civic messages in Hellenistic temples in Roman Asia Minor, or ideological messages such as the triumph of Christian *paideia* over pagan *paideia*.

The fourth part juxtaposes chapters on pagan and Christian epiphany. Despite the changes in sacred architecture, the retreat of the focal point of religious ritual from the outside to the inside, and corresponding changes in the methods of evoking the presence of the divine, the principle of 'guided perception' remained in force.

As said above, the volume also offers unexpected perspectives by inviting readers to select their own combination of different chapters. For instance, someone interested in initiation could read the chapter on the liminal role of sacred gateways in Neoplatonic philosophy (Tissi) beside the chapter on Christian baptismal liturgy (Day); the reader interested in the church door as the entrance to paradise in the poetry of Paulinus of Nola (de la Portbarré-Viard) could continue with the contributions of de Blaauw on the Paradise of St Peter's and Dijkstra on Peter as the gatekeeper of heaven; while the discussion of visual echoes between the decoration of the outside (doors) and the inside of a church (holy of holies) (van Opstall) might lead the reader to compare this aspect with the 'guided perception' from the outside (doors) to the inside of a Greek temple (cult statue) (Williamson); etc.

However, the book does not pretend to offer a complete overview of the topic over the Mediterranean area as a whole. While the main focus is on doors to pagan and Christian sanctuaries, pagan Late Antiquity receive less attention than Christian Late Antiquity. This is no coincidence. As far as I can see, the material world of pagans in Late Antiquity, whether in the Greek- or in the Latin-speaking world, is still relatively unexplored. It would be fascinating to be able to discuss, side by side, the doors of sanctuaries of pagan temples and Christian churches co-existing around the same period in the same city, for example in the case of Jerash in Jordan. Annabel Wharton gives an interesting sketch of the city in post-classical times.[40] In the city centre stood the

40 Wharton (1996).

impressive sanctuary of Artemis, built in the mid-second century and renovated in the first half of third century CE. Processions began on the other side of the river and moved towards the entrance of the temple through two monumental *propylaea* divided by the colonnaded cardo. The *propylaea* possessed triple triumphal arches and inscriptions on the architraves. Then, a first majestic flight of stairs led towards a U-shaped terrace with an open-air altar while a second staircase led towards the temple precinct.[41] At a certain point in time, the temple itself was apparently abandoned. The West *propylaeum* was turned into a Christian church in the mid-sixth century CE.[42] The recent archaeological report on the *propylaea* by Brizzi, Sepio and Baldoni explains this transformation by 'a change in the religious and public function of the area during the Middle and Late Imperial phases. The end of the pagan cult in the sanctuary, and accompanying political changes in the administration of the city made property transferral easier, thus enabling an unknown religious authority to establish a complex in this important precinct.'[43] Around the same period, as the chapter by Gianfranco Agosti in the present volume shows, a citizen entering the church of St Theodore (494–495 CE) and the church of St John the Baptist (531 CE) was confronted with triumphalist Christian rhetoric in the inscriptions above the church doors. The fact that these messages were conveyed in this manner indicates that the triumph of Christianity was quite fresh. Yet, we know nothing about the period up to 550 CE, when the temple of Artemis was still in use; paganism still exhibited a certain vitality while simultaneously Christianity was spreading.

With regard to pagan temples of Late Antiquity, when they have been studied the main focus has been on their destruction or re-use by Christians. Fortunately, recent archaeological studies such as those appearing in the Brill series *Late Antique Archaeology* edited by Luke Lavan are a sign that this situation is improving. In the case of the present volume, various volumes of this series have proven very useful, such as the above-mentioned Lavan, Swift and Putzeys' *Objects in Context, Objects in Use: Material Spatiality in Late Antiquity* (2007), and Gwynn, Bangert and Lavan's, *Religious Diversity in Late Antiquity* (2010), as well as Lavan and Mulryan's *The Archaeology of Late Antique 'Paganism'* (2011). These and similar specialized archaeological studies are an

41 To give an impression of the dimensions: the two lateral openings of the West *propylaeum* were 2.90 m. high and about 0.90m. wide, the central opening was arched with a span of about 4 m. (see Brizzi, Sepio, Baldoni (2010) 349); the U-shaped terrace measured 162 × 121 m.

42 Lavan (2007) 37, n. 79 and Brizzi, Sepio and Baldoni (2010) 350.

43 Brizzi, Sepio and Baldoni (2010) 350.

invaluable basis for further interdisciplinary research on Late Antiquity of the kind presented in this book. At the same time, research into Early Christian churches has been taking a wider perspective for some time now, both from a predominantly formal analysis to aspects of function and ritual and as collective and individual experience, as various papers in this volume demonstrate. Hopefully, the contributions of the present volume will inspire readers from different disciplines to continue this kind of interdisciplinary research.

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The idea for a volume about doors of sanctuaries as places of transition in Late Antiquity arose some time ago. Although many academics from various backgrounds immediately showed interest in participating in a conference and writing a contribution for a volume on this topic, fundraising proved to be particularly difficult. I would like to thank several people for their unrelenting enthusiasm and invaluable help in realising my idea: Marco Last for helping me to write applications for funding; Sible de Blaauw for co-organising the conference and for his encouragement and advice; Anne Kers for her reliable practical assistance before and during the conference; the authors for writing their inspiring contributions; Juliette Day and Roald Dijkstra for being the first to submit their papers—even before the deadline; Evelien Roels for writing and submitting her chapter within very few months; Murray Pearson for correcting the English of several parts of the present book; Gert-Jan Burgers for his advice on archaeological matters; Maria van de Poel for the meticulous editing of every single contribution; the various Brill-editors for monitoring and editing the volume with care: the series-editors of *Religions in the Graeco-Roman World*, among whom especially David Frankfurter and Miguel John Versluys, as well as the editors Maarten Frieswijk, Stephanie Paalvast, Giulia Moriconi, and in particular Tessa Schild and Debbie de Wit; the anonymous peer reviewers whose insightful recommendations helped to give this book its final shape; and, last but not least, Pierluigi Lanfranchi, *uomo universale*, who never tired of discussing doors and thresholds with me, even over dinner.

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PART 1

Experiencing Sacred Thresholds



CHAPTER 1

On the Threshold

Paul the Silentiary's Ekphrasis of Hagia Sophia

Emilie M. van Opstall

The starting point for this introductory chapter is the *Ekphrasis of Hagia Sophia* written by Paul the Silentiary in the sixth century CE. With this poem as a guide, I will take the reader on a tour of the actual church of Hagia Sophia (Holy Wisdom), built in the same century and still to be admired in the city of Istanbul today. I will discuss in turn each mention of a church door in Paul's hexameters, with special attention to the main entrance to Hagia Sophia, the so-called 'Imperial Doors', originally reserved for the emperor, the patriarch and their retinues. A literary commentary accompanies each reference to a church door, followed by a digression addressing archaeological and cultural-historical issues. Adopting a comparative perspective, other ekphraseis and monuments are taken into account, both Christian and pagan.[1] My aim is to reconstruct the wide range of elements that could have shaped the experience of a person entering Hagia Sophia in the sixth century. What would someone entering this church have seen, heard, smelled, or felt? Who was excluded at the church gates, and who was admitted? What symbolic meaning did these doors have? Which continuities or changes can be identified regarding pagan religious culture? This interdisciplinary exploration of a poem and a building is meant to offer the reader a paradigm for the various possible approaches to

1 Besides the present *Ekphrasis*, there are several other contemporary literary sources for Hagia Sophia: Procopius, *De Aed.* 1.1.20–78, Malalas, *Chron.* 18.143 (ed. Thurn), Agathias, *Hist.* 5.9, Evagrius, *Hist. Eccl.* 4.31, Romanus the Melodist, *Hymn* 54 and an anonymous inauguration-*kontakion* (see ed. Trypanis (1968) 139–147, 'the popular counterpart of Paul the Silentiary's erudite ekphrasis of St Sophia', and Palmer and Rodley (1988) 137–151). Source material from later periods (see Mango (1986) and (1992), Dagron (1984)) will not be taken into consideration in this article unless referring to features from the sixth century. The amount of studies on Hagia Sophia is infinite, as is the variety in approach. To cite some recent examples: Nelson (2004) (reception), Fobelli (2005) (translation with an art historical commentary), Moran (2006) (music and liturgy), Mainstone (1988) and Stichel (2010) (liturgy), Guidobaldi and Barsanti (2009) (doors and bronze elements), Bell (2009) (politics), Hauck, Noback and Grobe (2010) (light), De Stefani (2011) (textual edition), Pentcheva (2011) and (2017) (multisensory aesthetics), Kostenec and Dark (2011) (archaeology), Schibille (2014) (aesthetics); van Opstall (2017) (rhetorical analysis).

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the theme of this volume: *Sacred Thresholds. The Door to the Sanctuary in Late Antiquity.*

Preliminaries[2]

Hagia Sophia was built in 532–537 to replace the church that burned during the Nika riots of 532. During the years that followed, political unrest and natural disasters continued to undermine the authority of the emperor Justinian. Several riots, an attempt on the emperor's life, famine and bubonic plague had left their marks on the imperial authority. In 557–558, the dome and eastern end of Hagia Sophia collapsed during a series of earthquakes. By rebuilding the church quickly and raising its dome higher than before, Justinian clearly aimed to regain authority, at least symbolically, and to this end he organized a series of rededication ceremonies from 24 December 562 to 6 January 563. This was the occasion for which Paul the Silentiary wrote his *Ekphrasis of Hagia Sophia*. He recited his verses personally, probably on the final day of the ceremonies,[3] in the presence of Justinian and the patriarch Eutychius, as well as the clergy and the educated elite. He used the description of the church to extol imperial benevolence and power.[4] By doing so, he followed the example of his contemporary Procopius of Caesarea, who in his *On buildings* was the first to use buildings as a central element of imperial panegyric. Thus, Paul's poem is a panegyric with a strong political message, attributing an important role to the agency of the emperor in the (re-)construction of the church. Justinian is presented as the highly esteemed patron who quickly rebuilt the church with its magnificent dome, turning it into a beacon of divine light. The extension of his imperial power and influence is shown by the various building materials brought to Constantinople from all over the empire. Paul's *Ekphrasis* not only provides us with information on how Hagia Sophia *was* perceived and used, but also on how the poet *wanted* it to be perceived and used.[5]

The *Ekphrasis* contains over 1000 lines and is structured as follows:

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2 For a general introduction to the poem and its context see Whitby (1985), Macrides and Magdalino (1988), Fobelli (2005), Bell (2009).

3 The exact date of the deliverance of Paul the Silentiary's *Ekphrasis* is still a matter of debate.

4 See Whitby (2000).

5 For excellent discussions of the phenomenon of ekphrasis in Antiquity and Byzantium, see James and Webb (1991) and Webb (1999a and b, and 2009), and of ekphraseis of buildings in particular, see Webb (2011).

I. Prologues, 1–134
   - 1–80 first prologue in iambics (recited in the imperial palace)
   - 81–134 second prologue in iambics (recited in the patriarchal palace)

II. Ekphrasis,[6] 135–920 (recited in the patriarchal palace)
   - 135–353 introduction in hexameters
   - 354–410 ekphrasis proper (part 1) of the building in hexameters
   - 411–416 intermezzo in iambics
   - 417–920 ekphrasis proper (part 2) of the building in hexameters

III. Epilogue, 921–1029 in hexameters (recited in the patriarchal palace)

As shown above, Paul pronounced the first prologue in the imperial palace, located beneath the present-day precinct of the Blue Mosque,[7] praising the emperor and Constantinople. The company subsequently moved to the patriarchal palace, adjacent to the actual church.[8] There, the poet continued with his second prologue, now praising the patriarch and expressing a *captatio benevolentiae* for his own task.[9]

An Invitation to Celebrate the Emperor as Key-Bearer

From line 135 onwards Paul switches from a light-footed iambic tone to the more grandiose style of Homeric hexameters ('thundering sounds of Homer' as he will call them in line 617).[10] He invites Peace, New Rome, Old Rome and

6 In the tenth century manuscript, the title of the poem can be found before line 1 and before line 135. The description of the church itself, the most studied part of the poem, is limited to lines 354–410 and 417–920. In this chapter, I refer to this central part as 'ekphrasis proper'.

7 For the imperial palace, see Mango (1959).

8 For the patriarchal palace, near the south-west entrance, see Kostenec and Dark (2011) and fig. 1.2.

9 It must have been a rather difficult task to give a virtual guided tour of a building when the building itself was within a stone's throw. The rivalry between Paul's ekphrasis and the actual works of the emperor is expressed repeatedly in agonistic metaphors (102–110; see also 312, 353). See also van Opstall (2017) 9–11.

10 In his introductory lines in hexameters (135–353), Paul carefully prepares his audience for the 'ekphrasis proper' (354–920). For a rhetorical analysis of his *tour de force*, see van Opstall (2017); since the Imperial Doors of Hagia Sophia play an important role in these introductory lines, the present chapter partly resumes my earlier discussions of lines

the priests to sing hymns for the emperor. In lines 173–175 we find the first mention of church doors in the poem:

> οὐρανίων ὤϊξεν ἐπὶ χθονὶ κλῆθρα πυλάων
> Αὐσονίων σκηπτοῦχος, ὅλαις δ' ἐπέτασσεν ἑορταῖς
> εὐφροσύνην εὐρεῖαν, ὅλας ἤμβλυνε μερίμνας.[11]
>
> The sceptre-bearer of the Ausonians has opened on earth
> the bolts of the heavenly gates and he has opened wide <the doors of>
> boundless joy to all festivities; he has dulled all cares.

The opening of the rededication ceremonies is equated to the gates of heaven on earth and the sceptre-bearer is cast in the symbolic role of key-bearer. The image of the gates of heaven (and its counterpart the gates to the underworld) is traditional around the Mediterranean: in Greek mythology and philosophy (as early as Homer and Parmenides), in the Jewish and Christian Bible, as well as in Islam.[12] By depicting Justinian and not Eutychius as key-bearer of the gates to heaven on earth, Paul represents imperial power as trumping ecclesiastical power. Although the poem addresses and praises both, and although its performance takes place in the imperial as well as the ecclesiastical palace, presenting a certain harmony between the two spheres, its main purpose is clearly to extol the emperor.[13] In the historical reality of Late Antiquity, tension between the two powers was a recurrent issue. Several famous episodes show

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296–299, 311–314, 320–325, 347–349 and 350–353, elaborating them further—this time from an interdisciplinary perspective.

11 The Greek text is taken from the edition of De Stefani (2011) and the translation is based on a new translation by Mary Whitby, who kindly permitted me to cite from her still unpublished work. One could read ὅλας <δ'> here, suggested to me by Gerard Boter, to remove the asyndeton and to smoothen the hexameter (although by the sixth century α, ι and υ are dichrona scanned long or short according to need). The verb πετάννῡμι seems to be used in both literal and metaphorical sense (see LSJ *s.v.* 'spread out', 'open wide' (doors: πύλας) and 'elate' (one's heart: θυμόν, see also line 328). De Stefani adds many intertextual references in his *apparatus fontium*, of which I can only discuss a few in this article.

12 See e.g. Homer, *Il.* 5.748–752, 8.15, 8.392–396, 8.411–412, 9.312–313, 23.71–74; Hesiod, *Th.* 732, 742, 773, 811; Parmenides, *fr.* 1, 1–44; Gen 28.17; the twelve doors of heaven in Rev 21.21; the (eight) doors of heaven (Janna) in Quran 7.40 and 39.73. For doorkeepers and key-holders, see Dijkstra in chapter 7 of this volume.

13 See Bell (2009) 82 and Cameron (1984) 255. In 326–330 the emperor opens the church doors, but in 351 and 442 the priests and doorkeepers are mentioned as key-bearers of Hagia Sophia. In 788–789 the apostle Peter is referred to as key-bearer of the heavenly gates.

how the animosity between state and church—caused by caesaropapism—was literally fought out on the church threshold. Patriarch Babylas closed the church door to the pagan emperor Numerianus in Antioch 'in order to protect his sheep from the wolf' (third century CE).[14] And after the massacre in Thessaloniki in 390 CE the bishop Ambrose forbade the emperor Theodosius I from entering his church in Milan with blood-stained hands.[15] Under Justinian, this tension still persisted, since 'imperial ceremonial adopted an increasingly religious tone, emphasizing the unique place of the emperor at the intersection of the divine and earthly hierarchies of power.'[16]

Flashback to the Reconstruction: Visitors Entering the Rebuilt Church

In the following lines, Paul the Silentiary narrates in an extended flashback how the church had collapsed in the earthquake of 558 and was subsequently rapidly rebuilt by the emperor Justinian. He describes the breathtaking impression of the rebuilt church on visitors, combining two well-known *topoi*, 'art-surpassing-nature' and 'the church-as-a-microcosm' (286–310).[17] People usually get tired when bending their neck to look up at the starry sky, but they will never get enough of looking up at Hagia Sophia's dome—a heavenly vault in miniature, an artistic masterpiece.[18] Lines 296–299 describe the experience of the transition from the profane to the sacred in terms of an immediate and overwhelming impact on the beholder. When stepping from every-day life into the world of the church, one will be spellbound:

> εἰ δέ τις ἐν τεμένεσσι θεουδέσιν ἴχνος ἐρείσει,
> οὐκ ἐθέλει παλίνορσον ἄγειν πόδα, θελγομένοις δέ
> ὄμμασιν ἔνθα καὶ ἔνθα πολύστροφον αὐχένα πάλλειν·
> πᾶς κόρος εὐπήληκος ἐλήλαται ἔκτοθεν οἴκου.

14 See Philostorgius, 7.8, John of Damascus, *Pass. mag. mart. Art*. 54.1 and Souda *s.v.* Babylas.

15 Theodoretus, *Hist. Eccl.* 5.17–18.

16 Sarris (2002) 45. For other examples, see also Herbert de la Portbarré-Viard in chapter 10 of this volume.

17 Another *topos*, that of 'the-spectator-who-does-not-know-where-to-look-first', is also popular in late antique ekphraseis, compare Procopius, *De Aed.* 1.1.47–49 and 62–63, Choricius, *Laud. Marc*. 1.17–19 on the porch and 23ss. on the church interior of the St Sergius at Gaza.

18 This *topos* is also present in the anonymous *kontakion* on the inauguration of Hagia Sophia (cited in n. 1). See for a discussion Schibille (2014) 37–41.

> But if anyone plants his footstep inside the sacred precincts,
> he is unwilling to withdraw his foot again, but with enchanted
> eyes, will turn and twist his neck hither and thither:
> all satiety is expelled from the fair-helmeted house.

The equation 'church : heaven', popular in church descriptions, is embedded in a more general symbolic system of equation between the microcosm and the macrocosm. Such equations are basic principles of human thought, used to organize the world around us.[19] Doors occupy a special position in them, since they mark the boundary between two different spaces and help us to 'spatialize thought'.[20] The apostle Paul for example equates our body with the temple, and our mouth with the temple doors (in II *Cor* 6.16–6.18). John Chrysostom (ca 349–407) elaborates this symbolism in one of his homilies, when he regards the mouth of the body as the door to the temple that needs to be pure (*In Ep. 2 ad Cor.* 30.2): 'when we exchange the sacred kiss, we kiss so to speak the entrance, the portico of this temple'; … 'many people kiss the vestibule of this church bowing their head, touching it with their hand, bringing their hand to their mouth'; … 'through this door Christ has entered and enters during the communion'; and … 'the mouth of the priest is the <door to the> sanctuary through which the oracles for the initiated go.'

The Poet Lingers Outside the Church, Reluctant to 'Open the Gates of Song'

In lines 311–314 of Paul the Silentiary's *Ekphrasis* we again encounter the main entrance. The poet asks himself why he is still 'lingering outside the church' and begs the priests to intercede, like Muses, as intermediaries between himself and God:

> ἀλλὰ τί δηθύνω λαθικηδέος ἦμαρ ἑορτῆς
> ὑμνῆσαι; τί δὲ μῦθον ἐλίσσομεν ἔκτοθι νηοῦ;

19 For the equation of church-Tabernacle-Heaven, see Eusebius on the Church of Tyre, *HE* 10.4.55–69 (fourth century) and the anonymous *kontakion* on the inauguration of Hagia Sophia (sixth century; cited in note 1). The 'church-as-heaven' *topos* would remain popular especially in descriptions of cross-in-vault churches in the Middle-Byzantine period. For more examples in the Jewish and Christian tradition, see Macrides and Magdalino (1988) 51–52. See e.g. Lotman (1990).

20 Le Goff (1981) 4.

> ἴομεν ἐν τεμένεσσι, θεὸν δ' ὑμνήσατε μύσται
> ἱκέσιον καλέοντες ἐμῶν χραισμήτορα μύθων.
>
> But why do I delay in celebrating the day of the care-banishing
> festival? Why do I unwind my tale outside the temple?
> Let us enter the precincts. Sing praises of God, initiates,
> invoking him in supplication to assist my words.

He invites his audience to enter Hagia Sophia, not physically—since they are in the patriarchal palace—but in their imagination. In these lines, the poet plays a rhetorical game with yet another literary *topos* of long tradition, that of 'speech-as-a-building-in-words'. The church building is not only the object of his ekphrasis, but is also used as a metaphor for its formal structure, and like the church his ekphrasis needs an appropriate entrance. The idea of an introduction to a poem as an attractive verbal vestibule to a luxurious dwelling in words is a rhetorical metaphor that can already be found in archaic poetry. In Pindar's ode for Hagesias of Syracuse, who won a mule race in the Olympian games in the fifth century BCE, the opening lines are as follows (*Ol.* 6, 1–4 and 27): 'Raising the fine-walled porch of our dwelling with golden pillars, we will build, as it were, a marvellous hall; at the beginning of our work we must place a far-shining front … It is right to open the gates of song (πύλας ὕμνων ἀναπιτνάμεν) for the chariot of the victorious mules.' This is precisely what Paul the Silentiary does. Before he 'opens the gates of song' he first 'places a far-shining front'. Put differently, instead of entering his 'building-in-words' as he announced in lines 311–314, he continues with a second narrative flashback, postponing the *moment suprême* of the entrance for another thirty lines. The long introduction, starting in line 135 and protracted until line 353, is meant as a 'dramatic lead-in'[21] to the ekphrasis proper of the church. It will become clear in the following sections that the main entrance of Hagia Sophia, the Imperial Doors, are an important feature. They have a pivotal function, literally as well as metaphorically. Literally, because of their very nature as doors that open and close, they mark the boundary between the vestibule and the nave of the church (see the section *The vestibule with the Imperial Doors* below); and metaphorically, because in the rhetorical dynamics of the poem, they mark the end of the introduction and the beginning of the 'ekphrasis proper' (see the sections *Flashback to 24 December, part one and part two* below).

21 Macrides and Magdalino (1988) 58.

Flashback to 24 December, Part 1: The Opening of the Church Doors

From line 320 onwards, the second narrative flashback begins. This time, the poet takes his audience back to the first day of the rededication ceremonies on 24 December 562. The poet makes them relive the first day of the procession, leading them slowly up to the Imperial Doors. By organising his poem this way, he fully exploits the two main features of ekphraseis prescribed by the ancient literary handbooks: *enargeia* (vividness) and *fantasia* (looking with the mind's eye) (320–325):

> ἦλυθε δ' ἠριγένεια σεβάσμιος, οἰγομένη δέ
> ἄμβροτος ἀρτιδόμοιο πύλη μυκήσατο νηοῦ,
> λαὸν ἔσω καλέουσα καὶ ἤρανον. εὖτε κελαινὴ
> νὺξ μινύθει καὶ πᾶσιν ἀέξεται ἠμάτιον φῶς,
> ὣς ἐτεὸν μινύθει, μεγάλου νηοῖο φανέντος
> νὺξ ἀχέων καὶ πάντας ἐπέδραμε χάρματος αἴγλη.
>
> There came the hallowed dawn, and as it opened
> the divine gate of the newly-built temple bellowed,
> summoning within people and guardian.[22] As dark
> night wanes and the light of day increases for all,
> so truly when the great temple appeared, waned
> the night of sorrows and over all ran the glimmer of joy.

These lines present the opening of the gates as an almost divine miracle: the immortal doors 'bellow' (μυκήσατο, an animal-like sound) as they open and the appearance of the church in the early morning is described as a long-awaited divine epiphany accompanied by light. The verb μυκάομαι is used by Homer for the gates of heaven—the clouds on Mount Olympos—which also bellow when they spontaneously swing open for the arrival of the goddesses Hera and Athena: αὐτόμαται δὲ πύλαι μύκον οὐρανοῦ (*Il.* 5.748–752 and 8.392–396, cf. *Il.* 12.460). Otto Weinreich called this kind of miraculous event a 'door-opening miracle' and demonstrated its presence in religious imagery in Homer and throughout pagan Antiquity.[23] However, while Paul the Silentiary's language at first suggests such a miracle, it soon becomes clear that the doors did not

22 Almost the same words as in line 439.

23 See the fascinating study of door opening miracles by Otto Weinreich (1929). For bellowing doors, see also in this poem also μεμυκότα (442) and Nonnus *Dion*. 45.329 (ἐμυκήσαντο).

open of their own accord, but that the emperor had actually ordered them to be opened (326–330):

> ἔπρεπέ σοι, σκηπτοῦχε μεγασθενές, ἔπρεπε Ῥώμῃ,
> ἔπρεπεν ἀμβροσίοιο θεοῦ προκέλευθον ἑορτῆς
> ὑμετέροις λαοῖσι θύρην νηοῖο πετάσσαι·
> ἔπρεπεν ἐξείης μετὰ θέσκελον ἦμαρ ἐκεῖνο
> ζωοτόκου Χριστοῖο γενέθλιον ἦμαρ ἱκέσθαι.
>
> It was fitting for you, mighty sceptre-bearer, it was fitting for Rome,[24]
> it was fitting, as harbinger to the festival of immortal God,
> to open wide the door of the temple to your people.
> It was fitting in turn that after that wonderful day
> came the birthday of life-giving Christ.

Generally speaking, it is obvious that the prominent architectural position of gates—whether monumental gateways (*propylaia*) or gates in a façade (*pylai*)—gives them an inviting function: a rich gate announces the riches one can expect inside and arouses the curiosity of passers-by. Late antique ekphraseis of church buildings emphasize this attracting function for believers and nonbelievers alike.[25] There is a clear difference here with the pagan cult, where temple doors did not invite people in. The altar where offering rituals were performed was placed outside and the *naos* was considered to be the realm of the divinity and as such had restricted access. The *cella* was generally open to certain persons on certain occasions: usually priests during their service, or purified visitors who wanted to make an offering at the cult statue of the divinity, occasional visitors with a passe-partout, or incubants who practically lived within the temple compound.[26] The door opening functioned as a frame to direct one's gaze towards the cult statue within or the gaze of the divinity towards the altar outside.[27] Unlike temple doors, open church doors invite

24 I.e. Constantinople, the New Rome.

25 Compare Greg. Naz. *Or.* 18.39, Eusebius on the church of Tyre, *HE* 10.4.38, Procopius on the New Church in Jerusalem, *De Aed.* 5.6. For the guiding function of the church in the late antique urban landscape, see Saradi (2003).

26 Hollinshead (1999) has argued that the innermost room (the so-called *adyton*, 'a place not to be entered') was not the most sacred place of a temple but a place to keep precious votives, see Williamson (chapter 11) and Csepregi (chapter 4) in this volume. See also Brulé (2012). To the lively descriptions of people inside a 'pagan' sanctuary, one could also add Euripides, *Ion*, 184–218 (sightseeing), 219–229 (purification).

27 See Williamson (chapter 11) in this volume.

people to enter and gather inside the building. Sanctity has, so to speak, 'concentrated' or 'retracted' itself into the well-defined area of the inner sanctuary, accessible only to priests. This most sacred space, comparable to the Holy of Holies in the Jerusalem Temple but also to the *adyton* in the pagan temple, was the ultimate place of divine presence.[28]

The opening of the doors of Hagia Sophia during the reinauguration ceremonies as described in lines 320–330 has an immediate positive effect, since by opening the church, the emperor, with his nearly divine status as God's representative on earth, takes away people's suffering. Whether opened or closed, sanctuary doors in Antiquity were often interpreted as a divine omen or as the expression of divine will. Well-known examples are the temple of the Roman god Janus, whose doors opened in times of war, and the entrance to the oracle at Cumae, 'an enormous cavern, into which lead a hundred gateways, a hundred mouths, from which rush as many voices, the answers of the Sibyl' (Verg. *Aen*. 6.42–44).

There are numerous stories from Late Antiquity about sanctuary doors that convey the divine message. When, in 432 CE, the Neoplatonic philosopher Proclus arrived at the Acropolis (εἰς τὴν ἄκραν),[29] the doorkeeper was about to close the gates. Proclus' biographer interprets this as a sign that he had a divine mission to preserve the school of Plato (Marinus, *Vita Procli* 10). In the story of Saint Mary of Egypt (Sophronius, *Vita Mariae Aegyptiacae* 22–24, *PG* 3712–3716), the penitent harlot recounts how, when she wanted to enter the church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, she was repulsed several times by an invisible force—until she repented before the icon of the Holy Virgin in the courtyard. This very icon was brought from Jerusalem to Constantinople by the emperor Leo the Wise (866–912) and would be venerated for centuries in the narthex of Hagia Sophia—an appropriate place.[30] In an edifying story of an unspecified date, the outer doors of Hagia Sophia open of their own accord when a centurion enters the church with a penitent seeking help. The latter wants to reconcile himself with his dead brother. The deceased appears miraculously inside the church and they make their peace.[31] However, as we have seen, the opening of the doors of Hagia Sophia during the reinauguration ceremonies had a human agent—the emperor Justinian.

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28 For the Jerusalem Temple, see the General Introduction in this volume.

29 Michell (1986) translates this as 'at the fortified gate', Saradi and Eliopoulos (2011) 267–272 interpret it as the Parthenon. See also Tissi in this volume, chapter 5, n. 24.

30 See Lidov (2004).

31 Ed. Delehaye (1966) 392–393, par. 5.

Flashback to 24 December, Part 2: Procession towards Hagia Sophia

The narrative flashback continues in 331–353: it is still the early morning of the first day of the rededication ceremonies. Psalms had been sung in the narthex of Hagia Sophia throughout the night (331–336):

> καὶ δὴ νὺξ τετέλεστο προηγέτις εὔποδος ἠοῦς
> εὐφροσύνην καλέουσα, θεοῦ δ' ὑπεδέξατο κῆρυξ
> ἄμβροτος ἀγρύπνοιο χέων κελάδημα χορείης
> θεσπεσίοις τεμένεσσι νέοις,[32] ὅθι μύστιδι φωνῇ
> παννυχίους Χριστοῖο βιαρκέος ἀνέρες ὕμνους
> ἀσπασίως ἐβόησαν ἀσιγήτοισιν ἀοιδαῖς.
>
> And so the night, guide of fair-footed dawn, had come to an end,
> summoning joyfulness, and God's immortal herald
> gave welcome, pouring out song from the unsleeping choir,
> in the wondrous new precincts, where men
> with mystic voice gladly shouted night-long hymns
> for life-preserving Christ in songs never silent.

After that, a large crowd, headed by the patriarch in a carriage carrying the Gospel,[33] holding white candles and singing hymns, packed the streets towards Hagia Sophia, 'and all Rome's path of the broad ways was made narrow …' (346–347). Paul's vivid description 'immerges' the imagination of his audience in the procession.

Processions, whether pagan or Christian, can be regarded as an extended liminal phase, with a multitude of people preparing for a religious transformation.[34] They move through an architecturally shaped space (often a sacred way), marked in various ways by gates, colonnades and steps, and lead towards a culminating point.[35] Usually they are accompanied by candle-light

32 I follow the edition of De Stefani (2011) who suggests χέων (333) (whereas Friedländer (1912) conjectured Πλάτων) and who in 334 reads τεμένεσσι νέοις for τεμένεσσιν ἑοῖς (see Friedländer (1912) 275, n. 332–333). Thus, the singing did not take place in the Church of Saint Plato, from where the procession departed (Theophanes, *Chron.* 238.18–24), but in the newly restored Hagia Sophia, towards which the procession was directed (see also 429–437). The herald is David (through his psalms in the narthex).

33 Theophanes, *Chron.* 238.18–24.

34 See Connelly (2011), Stavrianopoulou (2015).

35 See Miles (2012), Hollinshead (2015).

and singing and the carrying of sacred objects. Before the orthodox liturgy was firmly established, 'outdoor services' with open air processions competed with public victory celebrations and shows in the Hippodrome; there were also competing processions of rival Arians and Nestorians.[36] Pagan processions were still in vogue up to the end of the fourth or fifth century; examples include the Panathenaic procession which went through the City Gates via the Panathenaic Way and culminated on the Acropolis, and the Eleusinian procession from Athens all the way to Eleusis.[37] Especially in the Eleusinian procession, gates played an important role. Both the beginning and the endpoint of the procession were marked by lavishly adorned gates, one placed at the 'City Eleusinion' (the sanctuary of Demeter near the Acropolis) the other at the 'Telesterion' (the sanctuary of Demeter in Eleusis). Their decoration, applied on the inside and only visible for initiates, showed mystic symbols, some of them still extant today.[38] In Late Antiquity, Eleusis was renowned as a centre for adherents of spiritual Platonism, like the emperor Julian the Apostate, and various Greek cities were still interconnected by means of mystery rites.[39] The awareness of the ritual importance of the Eleusinian gates must have lingered on for a long time, if not for actual religious processions, at least as a living memory of a long-standing tradition.

In Paul's *Ekphrasis*, the description of the procession builds up suspense, leading the people during the ceremony of December 24 as well as the audience on January 6 slowly towards the *moment sûpreme* of the opening of the church doors, thus augmenting the impact. When the procession reaches the church, the second flashback ends. Just as in 296–299, Paul describes the reaction of the people as they entered the building, without mention of a door or threshold (347–349):

> … μολὼν δ' ἐπὶ θέσπιδας αὐλάς
> δῆμος ἅπας ἐπέβωσε χαρίσιον, οὐρανίας δέ
> ἀχράντους ἐδόκησεν ἐς ἄντυγας ἴχνια θέσθαι.

36 For outdoor services, see Taft (1992). For processions in time of Justinian, see Strube (1973) 65–71 and McCormick (1986) 35–130.

37 In the fourth century, Himerius *Or*. 47.12–17 still describes a Panathenaic procession, while Asterius of Amasea *Hom*. 10.9 criticizes adherence to the Eleusinian mysteries. Nocturnal sacrifices were abolished in 364 CE and sanctuary of Eleusis was eventually demolished in the fifth century. See Saradi and Eliopoulos (2011) and Miles (2012).

38 Miles (2012).

39 Saradi and Eliopoulos (2011).

> … and when they had come to the awesome courts,
> the entire people cried out in thanksgiving, thinking
> they had planted their steps in the undefiled vaults of heaven.

The word αὐλάς seems to indicate the esonarthex of the church,[40] while the word ἄντυγας in all likelihood refers to the nave of the church with its newly built dome.[41] The transition from the outside to the inside, from profane to sacred, is again presented as an overwhelming experience (fig. 1.1). Paul's immediate focus on the dome is not only relevant for the reinauguration of Hagia Sophia, but, as we have seen, it is also a common *topos* in Byzantine ekphraseis of sacred buildings.

We now come to the most dramatic and multi-layered passage of Paul's *Ekphrasis*, in which the central Imperial Door plays the main part. The poet equates the opening of this door during the procession of 24 December to the



FIGURE 1.1 *The entrance to Hagia Sophia: view to the* naos *through the central door of the esonarthex and the central Imperial Door.*
PHOTO: EMILIE VAN OPSTALL.

40 See Fobelli (2005) 425–428.

41 Strube (1973) 42.

starting-line (βαλβῖδος, see l. 353 below) of his 'ekphrasis proper' on 6 January in front of his audience in the patriarchal palace. He calls upon the priests as intermediaries between the profane and God. By asking the priests to open 'the doors of his song' he activates the imagination of his audience before beginning to describe the building. Rhetorically speaking, it is a key moment in the poem, full of suspense (350–353):

> οἴξατέ μοι κληῖδα θεουδέες, οἴξατε μύσται,
> οἴξατε δ' ἡμετέροισιν ἀνάκτορα θέσκελα μύθοις,
> εὐχωλὴν δ' ἐπέεσσι κομίσσατε· καὶ γὰρ ἀνάγκη
> ἁπτομένους βαλβῖδος ἐς ὑμέας ὄμμα τανύσσαι.
>
> Open the door to me, reverent initiates, open it,
> open the shrine of Divine wonder to my words,
> and offer a prayer for my verses. For indeed as we touch
> the starting-line, we must direct our eyes to you.

In these lines, Paul's language is rich in associations, metapoetic as well as religious. Nonnus' invocation of his Muses, the Mimallones, resonates in it, when he asks them for inspiration in the prologue of his *Dionysiaca* (1.11–12):[42]

> ἄξατέ μοι νάρθηκα, τινάξατε κύμβαλα, Μοῦσαι
> καὶ παλάμῃ δότε θύρσον ἀειδομένου Διονύσου.
>
> Bring me the fennel, rattle the cymbals, you Muses!
> Put in my hand the wand of Dionysos of whom I sing.

Paul's priests also have the role of Muses for his ekphrasis. Simultaneously, this exhortation recalls the impressive and numinous arrival of the god Apollo at his sanctuary in Callimachus' *Hymn to Apollo*, lending to Paul's verses the aura of a door-opening miracle (6–8):[43]

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42 Ed. Gigli Piccardi (2003).

43 Door-opening miracles were often accompanied by epiphanies of gods: on vase paintings and coins gods can be seen standing in the doorways of their temple, representing either an epiphany scene or their cult statue inside: such as the gigantic Apollo in the doorway of a temple on a fragment of a South-Italian red-figure vase (fourth century BCE), Allard Pierson Museum Amsterdam, inv. APM02579 (hdl.handle.net/11245/3.2666). On epiphanies in ancient Greek religion, see also Platt (2012) and Petridou (2015).

αὐτοὶ νῦν κατοχῆες ἀνακλίνασθε πυλάων,
αὐταὶ δὲ κληῖδες· ὁ γὰρ θεὸς οὐκέτι μακρήν·
οἱ δὲ νέοι μολπήν τε καὶ ἐς χορὸν ἐντύνασθε.

Push yourselves back now, you bolts of the gates,
Push yourselves back, you bars! For the god is no longer far away.
And you, young men, prepare yourselves for song and dance.

Paul uses the same hexameters, the same rhythm and a similar repeated aorist imperative. Lines 350–353 also contain a reference to the actual ceremonies during the inauguration. They evoke the refrain of Psalm 23:7 and 9 of the Septuagint, which according to some sources[44] was sung during the procession towards Hagia Sophia but according to others[45] during the liturgy in the church:

ἄρατε πύλας, οἱ ἄρχοντες ὑμῶν,
καὶ ἐπάρθητε, πύλαι αἰώνιοι,
καὶ εἰσελεύσεται ὁ βασιλεὺς τῆς δόξης.

Raise the gates, rulers of yours,
and be raised up, perpetual gates,
and the King of glory shall enter!

The Hebrew version (Psalm 24) was meant as a liturgical *carmen amoebaeum* to be sung in a procession.[46] In Paul the Silentiary, the Temple is replaced by the Church, and Jerusalem by Constantinople.[47]

The various processions and entrances into the church and the inner sanctuary would later become major features of the Constantinopolitan Liturgy. The meaning of the doors depends on the liturgical calendar and on regional tradition. For example, on Palm Sunday, the doors of the inner sanctuary represent the city gates of Jerusalem (heaven's gates). During the Paschal morning

44 Theophanes, *Chron*. 238.18–24.

45 Malalas, *Chron*. 18.143 (ed. Thurn).

46 The original Hebrew version (Psalm 24) is closer to the above-mentioned phenomenon of the 'dooropening-miracle', due to a difference in syntax. There, the gates are represented as animated and are asked to open themselves, lifting up their lintels (*roshechem*, your heads—translated in Greek by the curious vocative οἱ ἄρχοντες ὑμῶν).

47 This idea is expressed more clearly in the anonymous *kontakion* for the inauguration of Hagia Sophia (see n. 1).

service, the congregation leaves the church and gathers outside in front of its closed gates (the gates of hell), singing Psalm 23 (in Syrian practice). When the doors are opened, the people re-enter a church brightly lit, symbol of the Resurrection. During Easter the doors of the inner sanctuary stay open for longer than usual, expressing the victory of Christ over death. The dramatic impact of the closing and opening of the doors during liturgy is evident.[48]

After his introduction, Paul the Silentiary finally takes his audience on a virtual guided tour through the building. For the 'ekphrasis proper', he adopts the principle of περιήγησις or λόγος περιηγηματικός (in the most literal sense of the word). This type of description is already evident in Homer. In *Od.* 7.81–135, Odysseus stands on the threshold of the palace of Alcinous when the narrator takes over to lead us through the fairy-tale palace and gardens until he finally brings us back to the threshold.[49] In line 354, Paul's audience too is standing on the (virtual) threshold of the building that the poet is about to describe (fig. 1.2, no. 0). 'After the dramatic lead-in, the perspective of the liturgical procession-cum-guided tour is abandoned in favour of a more impersonal presentation, in which the audience and the builder or craftsman are frequently, but not systematically, involved, by means of expressions such as "he built" or "you will see"'.[50] However, 'impersonal' does not mean that sensual perceptions or symbolic meaning are absent.[51] The use of the verb νοέω in particular refers not only to the physical but also to the spiritual eye. The frequent use

48 See Day (chapter 2) and Boudignon (chapter 3) in this volume on liturgical entrances and the role of doors therein.

49 For περιήγησις or λόγος περιηγηματικός, see the late antique rhetorical handbooks. Aphthonius *Progymnasma* 12 (fourth century CE) gives a practical example of a tour around the Serapeum and Acropolis of Alexandria. Paul combines various organizing principles: progression through space (from the outside to the inside, using elements of the cosmos in the decoration) and through time (from dawn to dusk), the construction process and the most important feature (the 'head', here: the altar). See Macrides and Magdalino (1988). Most ekphraseis of buildings lead their audience from the outside to the inside (Flavius Josephus on the Jewish Temple, *Bellum Iudaicum* 5.5, Eusebius on the Church of Tyre *HE* 10.4.37ff., Choricius on the Church of St Stephen *Laud. Marc.* 2.28–54), some from the inside to the outside (Procop. *De Aed.* 5.6, 22–26 on the New Church of the Mother of God in Jerusalem, *AP* I.10.42ss. on the Church of Polyeuctus).

50 Macrides and Magdalino (1988) 58. Personal and impersonal verbs: νοήσεις in 389, 532, 609, 806, 828, 846, 855; (τις …) νοήσει in 417 and 586; (κατ-)ὄψεαι in 591; τις ὄψεται in 799; ἴδοις (potential optative without ἄν) in 628 and 880, and τις ἴδοι in 851. Usually, art historical and archaeological studies focus on this part of the poem, the 'ekphrasis proper'. For the importance of its introduction, see van Opstall (2017).

51 See e.g. Pentcheva (2011).

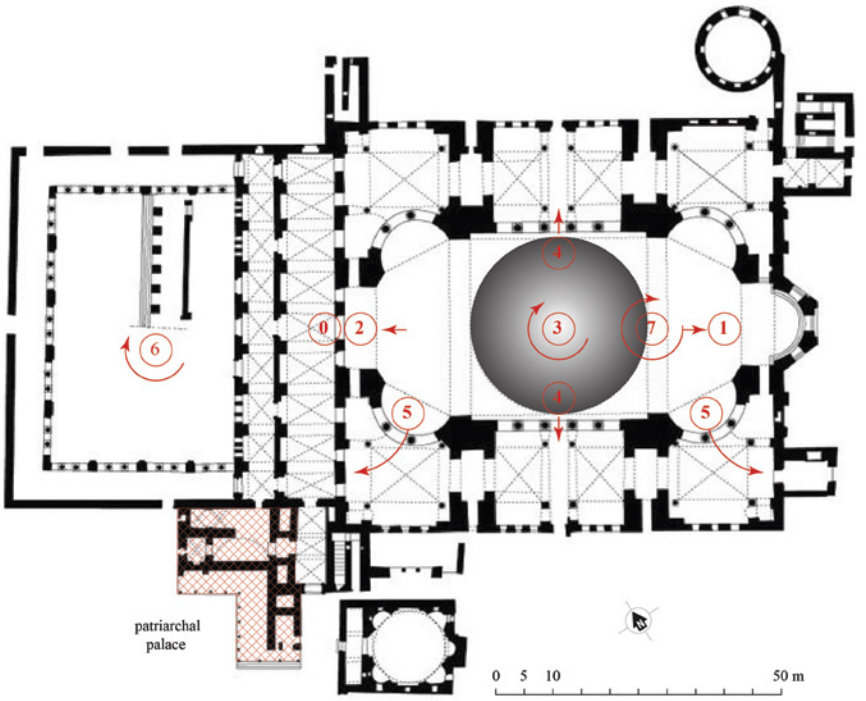


FIGURE 1.2 *Floor plan of Hagia Sophia.*
SOURCE: JAAP FOKKEMA, VRIJE UNIVERSITEIT AMSTERDAM.

of the future tense prepares the audience for what it will see once they are inside. They are being prepared for the anagogical message hidden in the various effects of the fabulous decoration representing heaven and earth, and the illumination turning Hagia Sophia into 'a beacon of divine light' (906–920).

The Inner Vestibule with the Imperial Doors

Once inside, Paul leads our gaze first towards the east end of the church—the focal point of pre-iconolastic churches (fig. 1.2, no. 1)[52]—where the Eucharist is celebrated, and then briefly towards the spectacular new dome. After a short intermezzo in iambics (411–416), our gaze is directed towards the west end (fig. 1.2, no. 2; 417–443). The Imperial Doors, now approached from inside the

52 Spieser (1995); 'the pure soul of the universal Priest', according to Eusebius, *HE* 10.4.68.

building as being part of its west wall, are mentioned only briefly. This time they function as boundary markers of the sacred space (423–424):

> ἀλλὰ δύσις πυλεῶνα μέγαν πολυ[δαίδ]αλ[ον ἴσχ]ει,
> οὐχ ἕνα· τριχθαδίους γὰρ ἔχει κατὰ τέ[λσα[53] μελ]άθρου.
>
> But the west holds a great and richly-wrought portal,
> not one: for it is threefold at the limits of the hall.

The wings of these three doors are now lost. According to the *Narratio de Santa Sophia* (written before the tenth century) the doors of Hagia Sophia were extremely opulent (presumably only on the outside):

> Justinian also made doorways below and above to the number of 365. At the first entrance [coming] from the atrium, he made doorways of electrum [= an alloy of gold and silver], and in the narthex matching doors [also] of electrum. In the second narthex he made three ivory doors on the left side and three on the right and in the middle three doorways, namely two matching ones, and one very big, of gilded silver, and all the doors he gilded. Inside these three doors, instead of ordinary wood, he placed wood from the Ark …[54]

Passing from the west wall of the nave to the vestibule, Paul mentions seven doors in the esonarthex. Five of them led from the esonarthex to the exonarthex, one towards the south-west (the entrance for the emperor), one towards the north-east (leading to the galleries). When opened, their hinges made a deep, booming sound (see also 321) (438–443):[55]

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53 Compare l. 443 below, on the doors in the western wall, 'the outmost (ὕστατος) of the building'.

54 Par. 18, ed. Preger (1901–1907, repr. 1989) 96–97, translation Mango (1986). The covering of the doors in silver and gold is confirmed by several later sources. In this article, I discuss features of Hagia Sophia as they can be reconstructed for the sixth century CE. Therefore, elements added during later periods and mentioned in descriptions of visitors to the city from the eleventh to the fifteenth century are not taken into consideration, such as the mosaics above the entrances and the miracle working icons of Christ and of the Holy Virgin attached near the Imperial Door. The doors that were believed to contain wood from Noah's Ark are also mentioned as objects of veneration. For a discussion, see e.g. Lidov (2004).

55 See Fobelli (2005) ad 438–443 for the complicated system of entrances linked to the choreography of the liturgy.

> ἑπτὰ δ' ἀνευρύνας ἱεροὺς πυλεῶνας ἀνοίγει,
> λαὸν ἔσω καλέοντας ὁμιλαδόν· ἀλλ' ὁ μὲν αὐτῶν
> ἐνστρέφεται νάρθηκος ἐπὶ στεινοῖο μετώπου
> ἐς νότον, ὃς δὲ βορῆος ἐπὶ πτερά· τῶν γε μὲν ἄλλων
> νηοκόρος παλάμῃσι μεμυκότα θαιρὸν ἀνοίγει
> ἑσπέριον περὶ τοῖχον, ὃς ὕστατός ἐστι μελάθρου.
>
> Spreading out, <the narthex> opens seven holy portals
> that summon the people inside in crowds. One of these
> on the narrow face of the narthex is turned
> to the south, another at the wing of the north wind; and of the others
> the temple-warden with his hands opens their bellowing pivot
> along the western wall, which is the outmost of the hall.

Nowadays, most of the doors *in situ* are nineteenth-century copies.[56] Only a few are original, such as the bronze doors leading from the exonarthex to the esonarthex, whose upper part shows a cross beneath an arch, while the lower part depicts a cross on top of Mount Golgotha with the four rivers of paradise flowing down from it (fig. 1.3–4). As in the central Imperial Door, there is an obvious link with Christ (see below). Their cornice is finely decorated with little birds and two small medallions with haloed lambs. The latter face each other when the doors are closed and bow towards the east when the doors are open, thus modelling the behaviour of the participants in the ceremonies, who are Christ's flock.[57] In various places traces of precious metals (gold and silver, and copper) are visible.[58] Other original doors in the vestibules show differents ornamental elements, such as clipei and crosses or vases with plants and a cross.[59] The cornice of each door is made of polished marble and has hooks in the form of fingers (with nails! visible on fig. 1.6) for the curtains.

Today, the original curtains are lost. We know that for the inauguration of the Great Church of Constantinople on 15 February 360, Constantius II brought 'exquisite golden curtains for the church doors and for the external gateways curtains interwoven with gold'.[60] We have a fair idea of what church curtains

56 See Guidobaldi and Barsanti (2009) and Strube (1973). For a recent study on the SW entrance, see Niewöhner and Teteriatnikov (2014).

57 Since I have not been able to study these ornaments personally, I quote Nelson (2004) 13.

58 Similar themes recur on other contemporary objects in silver, see Barsanti and Guidobaldi (2009).

59 See Barsanti and Guidobaldi (2009).

60 *Chronicon Pasquale* (seventh century), ed. Dindorf (1832) 544.



FIGURES 1.3 *The bronze decoration of the doors to the esonarthex. The upper part of the leaves of the doors show a cross beneath an arch.*
PHOTO: EMILIE VAN OPSTALL.



FIGURES 1.4 *The bronze decoration of the doors to the esonarthex. The lower part of the leaves of the doors show a cross on top of Mount Golgotha with the four rivers of Paradise flowing down.*
PHOTO: EMILIE VAN OPSTALL.

usually looked like, not only from literary sources but also from mosaics, where they are depicted hanging in door openings and between columns. They were made of coloured linen or wool and were sometimes embroidered. They delimited sacred spaces and functioned as symbolic boundaries, especially the curtain at the inner sanctuary (the so-called *katapetasma*). There is a clear echo in these curtains of the archetypical curtain of the Tabernacle, with the power both to hide and to reveal.[61] Besides having a symbolic meaning, church curtains also served a practical purpose as they kept out flies and heat and protected the people inside against draughts and cold; in addition, their texture offered warmth. To enter a church, one had to push them aside. To cite James: 'Touch … was a key element in the experience of any Byzantine worshipper. Sensations of touch are immediately apparent on entering a Byzantine church today as the cool air inside strikes the body. Touch was also an active sense as worshippers engaged on a physical level with objects within a church, doors, columns, relics, and above all, icons,'[62] kissing or touching them with their fingers, as we have seen in John Chrysostom.

The central Imperial Door to Hagia Sophia is the most impressive.[63] As we have seen, it is this door that plays an important role in the introduction to Paul's 'ekphrasis proper'. Flanked by two smaller doors, it measures 7.60 metres in height and nearly 4 metres in width, its threshold is now heavily worn (fig. 1.5). It is aligned with the doors from both the eso- and the exonarthex, creating a direct visual line from the atrium to the 'holy door' in the chancel barrier (as can be seen on the floor plan, fig. 1.2). The entire frame of the central Imperial Door is made of bronze. Barely visible from below, the bronze hood shows an image, a small relief, depicting an arch with the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove descending towards an open Bible placed on a throne (see fig. 1.6; for a splendid close-up picture, see Mango and Ertuğ 1997, plate 8).[64] The text on the pages shows a slightly adapted version of Christ's words to the Pharisees in John 10.9: 'I am the Door: when somebody enters me, he will be saved and he will go in and out and find pasture.' This is what

61 See Flav. Jos. *BJ* 5.212–214 on its cosmical decoration. On the *katapetasma* of Hagia Sophia see Lidov (2014) and the General Introduction to the present volume.

62 James (2004) 527; see also Caseau (2009) 567 and (2013) 64–69. Icons were considered to be a gate to heaven (Steph. Diac. *Vita Steph. iun.* 26.15).

63 Strube (1973) 17; Fobelli (2005) ad 423–444.

64 Lidov (2004) 11 interprets the image as the empty throne of the Second Coming, Barsanti and Guidobaldi (2009) 92 as the Trinitarian throne.

the faithful could expect once they crossed the threshold: salvation. Various dates have been suggested for the hood, ranging from the sixth to the thirteenth century.[65] The quoted passage from John was so well known that the church door could have evoked these emblematic words in the minds of the faithful, even if it was too high to see.[66]

The relief has the same function that texts above entrances or on walls of temples or churches usually have (whether official inscriptions in prose or verse, or graffiti): they all aim to direct the mindset of the person who passes through the gate, influencing his or her thoughts and feelings. Messages put



FIGURE 1.5 *The central Imperial Door to Hagia Sophia: the threshold.* PHOTO: EMILIE VAN OPSTALL.

65 See e.g. Fobelli (2005) ad 423–424; Guidobaldi and Barsanti (2009) 93; Mango and Ertuğ (1997) 14.

66 This emblematic passage in Christian teaching recurs in various articles on sacred gates in this volume. Compare also *Eph* 2: 19–22.



FIGURE 1.6 *The bronze relief above the central Imperial Door.*
PHOTO: EMILIE VAN OPSTALL.

in this place could be of a religious or political nature, ranging from civic messages to expressions of triumph of Christianity over paganism.[67]

Although the bronze decoration of Hagia Sophia tells us to interpret the Imperial Door as Jesus, Paul's verses offer no such symbolic interpretation. He does not follow Eusebius, who describes the three gates of the basilica at Tyre as 'a queen escorted by her attendants', decorated sumptuously with 'iron-bound appliques of bronze and carved ornaments'. Eusebius also adds a symbolic interpretation: the great entrance-gate is 'the glorification of the one and only God, the King of all', while the two smaller doors represent Christ and the Holy Ghost. The guardians who guide the people inside the church of Tyre are the 'front gates of the temple' (τοῦ νεὼ πρόπυλα).[68] Although explicit symbolic interpretation is absent in Paul the Silentiary's text, the idea of Christ as a door is so obvious from other sources, that it must have been present in the mindset of every Christian who crossed the threshold of the church.

There is a strong idea of unity in the architectural decoration of Hagia Sophia. Although the effect of the precious materials is no longer visible, they once offered abundant visual echoes: the radiance of the ivory, silver and gold on the outer doors announced and evoked the focal point of the church, the inner sanctuary. Beneath the triumphal arch, marking the passage from the *naos* to the inner sanctuary, the inner sanctuary shines with silver and gold (Procopius, *De Aed.* 1.1.65 mentions 40.000 pounds of silver). Jean-Michel Spieser discusses examples of various early Christian churches with similar thematic correspondences between the decoration of the outer doors, the doors leading from the narthex to the nave, the templon, the triumphal arch and the apse, all representing the presence of God.[69]

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67 See the articles by Roels (chapter 8), Agosti (chapter 9), and Herbert de la Portbarré-Viard (chapter 10) in this volume. See also Spieser (1995) on the function of inscriptions on and decorations of church doors. To add a few more examples: the famous 'Know yourself' on the temple of Apollo in Delphi was an invitation to the passer-by to reflect. According to Plutarch's *Apud Delphos*, the mysterious letter 'Epsilon' on the pediment of the same temple represented the five wise men whose sayings were carved on the wall of the vestibule, until the tyrants Cleoboulos and Periander added themselves to their number for political reasons. On a column near one of the entrances to the basilica of Saint John (the apostle, also known as 'the Theologian') at Ephesus someone inscribed the following graffito: 'Approach the gate of the Theologian with fear'.

68 Eus. *HE* 10.4.63–65. Compare Hermas (first-second century), *Similitude* 9 ('The great mysteries of the building of the militant church').

69 Spieser (1995). On the way out one notices the inner sanctuary itself reflected in a marble image of the ciborium at above the Imperial Door (of uncertain date).

The visual effect of precious materials in Hagia Sophia strikes me as similar to the thematic harmony used in important pagan sanctuaries like the Athenian Parthenon. As has been recently shown by Pope and Schulz (2014), the doors of the Parthenon shone with gold and ivory inlay and were an immediate echo of Athena's famous cult-statue by Pheidias from the fifth century BCE, dazzling with gold and ivory like an epiphany of the goddess herself. The dress was removed in 295 CE, but the statue itself was still in place until at least 485, until it was definitively taken down before the reconsecration of the Parthenon as a church for the Virgin Mary in the fifth or sixth century. Even with the doors of the temple closed and the sight lines from outside towards the cult statue of the goddess interrupted, her presence could be felt by the material echoes between the decoration of the door and the cult statue, creating a tension between revelation and concealment.[70]

Various examples of 'richly wrought' doors from Late Antiquity still exist in the Latin West and in the Greek East. The doors of the Sant' Ambrogio in Milan (386 CE) and of the Santa Sabina in Rome (410 CE) have elaborated carvings with scenes from the Old and New Testament,[71] although others have much simpler aniconic motifs. Probably inspired by Hellenistic models, they are divided into decorated panels.[72] The so-called 'Beautiful Gate' in bronze in the south vestibule of Hagia Sophia, taken from the Hellenistic temple of Tarsos, is a (relatively simple) pagan model of such monumental gates. In the case of several important temples whose gates are lost, such as the Parthenon in Athens (see above) and the temple of Apollo on Delos, inscriptions from temple archives show that precious materials were used for the doors.[73] Besides archaeological evidence, there are ekphraseis of richly decorated temple doors in epic poetry, for instance the famous doors of the temple of Juno in Vergil's *Aeneid* (1.448–493, see also 6.20–34) and of Sol in Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautics* (5.416–454). In their epic context, these doors are of course first and foremost imbued with metapoetical meaning, but they also indicate the existence of actual doors of this type in Antiquity.[74]

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70 See also Williamson in this volume (chapter 11).

71 Spieser (2009) and Foletti and Gianandrea (2015).

72 Compare the sixth century 'Marble Doors' on the upper gallery of Hagia Sophia, leading to a seperate imperial space (not mentioned by Paul the Silentiary). For the date, see Hjort (1979) 223; Grabar (1963) 74–76, 131 and planche XXV n. 66.

73 Pope and Schulz (2014) for the Parthenon, Hellmann (1992) for Delos *s.v.* θύρα, πρόπυλον and πύλη.

74 See for Vergil: Putnam (1998) 23–54, Kirichenko (2013); for Valerius Flaccus: Heerink (2014).

The disposition and the decoration of the doors of Hagia Sophia were clearly an integral part of a larger religious programme, designed to shape the experience of the faithful. They announce, even when closed, the presence of the divine inside and influence the way in which the sacred space was experienced.

Outer Vestibule, Atrium, Inner Sanctuary

Let us return to Paul's *Ekphrasis*. After describing the west end of the nave with the esonarthex, he finally moves slowly towards the most beautiful part of the church: the dome (fig. 1.2, no. 3, 444–531). He then continues by describing what one will see at the north and south walls and aisles and galleries (fig. 1.2, no. 4, 532–585), including a double door to the baptistery to the north (563–565), after which he turns to the west and east exedrae (fig. 1.2, no. 5), with double doors in the west and single doors in the east (571–574). He then takes us outside, through the exonarthex into the atrium with its porticoes and fountain (fig. 1.2, no. 6, 586–616).

In Paul's *Ekphrasis*, the narthex was the place where the participants of liturgical procession gathered to enter the nave and where psalms were sung during nightly vigils (see above, 331–336 and 425–432). But on ordinary days, the (exo-)narthex of a Byzantine church had other functions: it was the place where the bishop 'greets the entrants with open heart and smiling countenance' and 'where a lovely summer breeze cools your body as it penetrates under the garments and lifts them up', just as colonnades protect people from winter rains.[75] It was also a site where slandering pamphlets were nailed to the door and penitential discipline was administered: a man who seduced a married woman would be excommunicated for four years and had to pass the whole first year weeping at the door of the church—to be only gradually admitted to the church during the following three years.[76]

Before entering a sacred space, one has to purify oneself: just as in the pagan *temenos*, where lustral vases were placed between the entrance and the altar, a water basin could be found close to every Christian church door. In the same area, the poor stretched out their hands to receive alms. John Chrysostom

75 Choricius of Gaza, *Laud.Marc*. 1.20–22 and 2.29.

76 Basil, *Ep*. 199.22.10–18, Mango and Ertuğ (1997). For ritual behaviour of people passing through the gates of Jerusalem Temple, see Cohn (2013): 74–80, esp.78. See Wendt (2016) on 'freelance experts' who lingered at temple doors offering their guidance.

repeatedly states that whereas the wash basins are meant to clean the hands, the beggars outside the church door serve to 'clean the hands of the soul'. By paying attention to them, you can purify yourself spiritually. According to John Chrysostom, beggars are the 'greatest ornaments of a sanctuary', 'perfecting the fullness of the Church', and constitute 'a ticket to heaven'.[77]

The atrium was a place for purification as well as a halting place.[78] The uninitiated, catechumens who had not yet been baptised and therefore could not yet participate in the Eucharist, remained there during the Eucharist. Just as in ancient mystery cults, the secret message was kept from the uninitiated.[79] This exclusion of outsiders to esoteric knowledge was expressed by a well-known Orphic formula 'close the doors, you profane', used in pagan as well as in Christian texts.[80] In an extended form, the metaphor of 'initiation as a sanctuary' is often used in Neoplatonic and Christian teaching. It describes the learning process of the student, who as an initiand proceeds through various doors and vestibules of knowledge towards the inner sanctuary of wisdom, accessible only to the initiates.[81]

Having shown what one can expect to see in the atrium, Paul returns to the nave to describe the interior decoration: the marble, opus sectile, mosaics on walls, floor, roof (617–681) and, finally, the focal point of the church: the Holy of Holies (682–805, the chancel screen with three entrances, one on each side, the ciborium, and the altar, fig. 1.2, no. 7). It was the most sacred place, where the human and the divine made contact, not only through an upwards movement from earth to heaven, but also downwards, because the divine was envisaged as descending on the church during the Eucharist.[82] The sparkling silver of the ciborium and the gold and precious stones of the altar below emphasized its importance.[83] Paul the Silentiary refrains from disclosing any more

77 Joh. Chrys. *De pen.* PG 49 col. 294; *In epist. I ad Cor.* 61 PG 61 col. 254.

78 See De Blaauw in this volume (chapter 6).

79 For the role of the uninitiated in liturgy, see Boudignon in this volume (chapter 3).

80 I mention a few of the many examples outside the Orphic/Neoplatonic sphere: Plato, *Symp*. 218b; Plut. *On stat*. 1; Eus. *Laud. Const.* Prologue 4.2 on the sacred wisdom of the emperor.

81 On Neoplatonic teaching, see Tissi (chapter 5) in this volume; on Christian teaching, see e.g. Chrysostom, *Hom*. 2 on *Matt*. 1–2. Compare ancient ideas on memory as a building and mnemotechnical devices using building-metaphors in *Ad Herennium*, Cicero's *De oratore* and Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria*, see Yates (1966) 1–49.

82 See Shilling in this volume (chapter 12).

83 One of the three doors in the silver chancel screen probably contained a medallion of Christ, see Mango and Ertuğ (1997).

of the mystery and asks the priests to unfold the purple altar cloth of woven silk sparkling with gold (755–805).[84] This showed (among other things) Christ, with raised hand, blessing St Paul and St Peter, 'the mighty key-holder of the heavenly portals' (788 σθεναρὸς κληδοῦχος ἐπουρανίων πυλεώνων, holding a cross instead of a key) under a triple arcade ('aedicola', in art historical terms).[85] Paul the Silentiary does not mention the *katapetasma* at the door to the inner sanctuary, symbolising the incarnation of Christ (see above). While he continues with a description of the illuminations (806–920), finishing with an encomium to Justinian (921–977) and Eutychius (978–1029), we end here our tour of the doors in the *Ekphrasis*. As we have seen, the motifs of the main entrance to the church—the three doors, the precious materials, the presence of Christ in the arcade on the relief in bronze—all prepare for the inner sanctuary. Thus, it becomes clear how architecture and iconographic programme collaborate to create a sacred coherent space.[86]

Conclusion

This introductory chapter is meant as an overture to the contributions in this volume, where the various approaches to sacred gateways will reveal many more aspects of the transition from the profane to the sacred in Late Antiquity. To explore the theme of this book and to illustrate its rich potential, I have taken the doors referred to in Paul the Silentiary's *Ekphrasis of Hagia Sophia* and of the actual church building as a starting point, directing the reader whenever relevant in the footnotes to the other contributions.

I followed the poet during his guided tour through the building. The numerous digressions at every mention of a doorway or adjacent space (the Imperial Doors, the doors in the inner- and outer vestibule, the atrium, the inner sanctuary) showed a great variety of functions and meanings of these spaces in Late Antiquity. Many of these also played a role for someone who

84 Some commentators interpret these lines as referring to the curtains of the ciborium.

85 See also Fobelli (2005) ad 755–805 suggests that the scene represents the *traditio legis*. See Dijkstra in this volume (chapter 7).

86 The status of Christian icons of both the central Imperial Door (said to contain the wood of the Ark of Noah—not mentioned by Paul the Silentiary, but according to the *Narratio de Sancta Sophia*, see above) and the curtain of Hagia Sophia's inner sanctuary (i.e. the *katapetasma* referring to Christ as Door—not mentioned by Paul the Silentiary, but according to reconstructions, see the General Introduction to this volume) would have enhanced the experience of unity.

entered Hagia Sophia in the sixth century, shaping his or her perception, whether he or she was part of Paul the Silentiary's audience on 6 January 653 or crossing the threshold of the church on a regular weekday.

In the rhetorical dynamics of Paul's *Ekphrasis*, the Imperial Doors of Hagia Sophia above all create narrative suspense. The poet presents them as a key feature of his flashback to the liturgical procession of 24 December, when the congregation gathered in front of them, full of the anticipation of entering the building. Simultaneously, he turns them into the pivotal element of his rhetorical strategy during the inauguration ceremony on 6 January, when he finally opens the doors of his ekphrasis and begins his description of the church.

In other late antique ekphraseis of churches, monumental gateways and ornate church doors often invite passers-by to enter. We have seen that in the case of the *Ekphrasis of Hagia Sophia*, the monumental gateways of the atrium are not mentioned, but the Imperial Doors play an important role. They must have been quite impressive when the huge bronze doors were still shining with ivory, silver and gold and the rich curtains echoed and announced the inner sanctuary. Walking in a procession accompanied by candle light and hymns towards the church entrance and stepping over the threshold into the beautiful nave with its soaring dome, meant entering into another world, not belonging to earth but to heaven—a microcosm conspicuously created by the emperor Justinian.

Other more regular functions and meanings of late antique church doors in general must too have shaped the experience of someone entering Hagia Sophia. In initiatory contexts, whether initiation into Greek philosophy or into Christian faith, sanctuary doors marked the progression from layman to initiate. This is evident in philosophical and religious language and rites, where the mind and the body are equated with a sanctuary (whether a temple or a church). Moreover, church doors had an important function in the liturgical architecture and rituals of the early Byzantine church. The doors, narthex and atrium were liminal places, where two spheres of power met. There the un-initiated were separated from the initiated, the impure had to purify themselves physically and spiritually before entering the church, symbol of heaven on earth. It was also the place where the poor begged for alms and excommunicated sinners wept, where inscriptions told one what to think or how to behave and where clashes between imperial and religious power might be witnessed. Church doors were believed to convey divine messages. The opening

and closing of sanctuary doors is frequently found in hagiographic stories, indicating that a divine presence is at work.[87]

Many pagan elements, from allegorical meaning to spatial organisation, seem to have had more than just an outward influence on the shaping of Christian religion, despite the different roles of the doors in the respective rites. Examples of this influence in the present chapter are the processions from holy gate to holy gate and the echoes of precious materials on the doors announcing the presence of the divinity inside, even when closed. Other contributions in the present volume reveal more patterns of experiences with similar contituities and changes—material, symbolic, religious or political.

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CHAPTER 2

Entering the Baptistery

Spatial, Identity and Salvific Transitions in Fourth- and Fifth-Century Baptismal Liturgies

Juliette Day

Drawing on cognitive, sociological and anthropological studies, Douglas J. Davies has explored the way in which rituals embed culturally and socially normative emotional responses and the way that these affect self-identity. He suggests that religious rituals, especially, promote the values of the group by channeling adherents' feelings into acceptable emotional responses, either by the impact of the ritual itself and the group's response, or more explicitly through education. The consequence is that the group retains a shared value system and in moments of crisis, of 'identity depletion', can draw upon the ritual memory to direct its attitudes and behaviour. As such, then, these ritual actions have a direct impact upon self-understanding, upon identity formation, and upon how the world is rendered meaningful: hence the main title of his book, *Emotion, Identity and Religion* (2011). Together with meaning, hope, reciprocity (or social engagement) and Otherness (the sense of the divine or spiritual power), Davies creates what he calls a 'syndrome' or 'pattern' of differently connected and integrated elements which religion presents and through which ritual action can be explored.[1] Notably, though, he does not provide a methodological framework and in what follows we shall combine his reflective approach with a more systematic and structural analysis of the rituals at the door of the baptistery in late antique Milan and Jerusalem to highlight the pedagogical role of emotion in these liturgies.

The rituals around the door of the baptistery are usually overlooked as simply preliminaries to the real action which takes place at the baptismal font, where the weight of theological, communal and personal significance is located; however, this investigation will show how important they are in establishing the emotional environment through which the candidates are enabled to apprehend and incorporate the Christian value system which the rest of the rite conveys. These rituals, therefore, also function in the creation of the new identity. The physical door of the baptistery can be seen as the place where the old identity and value system is left behind, where its meaning is

1 Davies (2011) Introduction.

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voided, with the effect that the candidate experiences a crisis of self, or of 'identity depletion'. Through participation in the remainder of the rite, identity is restored or rather newly created, and the mechanism by which this happens is dependent on the physical, verbal and emotional elements of the rite.

In the analysis which follows, I will present the rituals at the door of the baptistery in Milan in 390's as described by Ambrose, and those at the door of the baptistery of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem at a disputed date—either 380's or, as I prefer, in the early fifth century.[2] Milan and Jerusalem are particularly useful for our exploration as for both we have a relatively full description and interpretation of the baptismal liturgies and archaeological evidence for the place in which the rituals took place; however, as will be seen, the rituals are specific to these places, but the analysis may be applied elsewhere. In the analysis, I shall pay close attention to the ritual sequence, the roles of participants and the space in which it occurred. It is worth reiterating that our knowledge of these baptismal liturgies comes from catechetical lectures delivered *after* the candidates had experienced baptism, so-called 'mystagogical' catecheses. Both bishops explain why experience of the rituals must come before the explanation, and this indicates that they trusted in the power of the rituals to generate appropriate responses as the rite took place. These unrepeatable, once in a lifetime, rituals, I suggest, provoked a highly charged emotional response in the participants, such that the emotional memory, coupled with the authoritative explanations, enabled the participants to respond in approved and normative ways in the future when faced with similar identity crises. The rituals do, therefore, become part of the means by which the participants make sense of the world and of themselves.

Milan

Ambrose of Milan's explanation of the theological and spiritual significance of baptism to the newly baptized is provided in the *De Sacramentis* (*De Sac.*), and in a revised form in the *De Mysteriis* (*De Myst.*), both to be dated from around 390.[3] The former appears to be the text of homilies delivered to the newly baptized in Easter Week, whereas the latter, which contains almost the same information, is an abridged version which seems to have been edited for

2 See Day (2007a).

3 For a discussion of the authenticity of *De Sac.* see Botte (1961) 12–21 and Satterlee (2002) 20–29; both support Ambrose's authorship. On the dates of composition, see Deferrari (1963) 267.

publication. Both texts describe and interpret theologically the liturgy of baptism which Ambrose himself administered in Milan and together they can be used to reconstruct the rituals at and around the door of the baptistery even though, as we shall see, they do not entirely agree.

The focus, of course, is on the candidates and the liturgy which they experienced, but the baptistery itself is surprisingly prominent in the texts. As Hugh Riley as commented, Ambrose provides 'a graduated dramatic introduction into the mystagogy' based on the space, decor and furniture of the baptistery.[4] So the building is not just a stage or container for the rite, but is part of the embodied understanding of initiation, and this extends from a theology of the building itself to how it functions as a ritual space.

In a direct allusion to Temple imagery Ambrose calls the baptistery *sancta sanctorum* (the 'Holy of Holies', *De Sac.* 2.5) and tells them that the Jewish high priests would enter this 'second tent', by which he means the tabernacle in the Temple and the *baptisterium*, only once a year, whereas the outer tent, i.e. the basilica, they would enter regularly.

> In ueteri testamento sacerdotes frequenter in primum tabernaculum introire consueuerant, in secundum tabernaculum semel in anno summus intrabat sacerdos.... Quo spectat hoc? Ut intelligatis quod sit secundum tabernaculum in quo uos introduxit sacerdos, in quo semel in anno summus sacerdos intrare consueuit, hoc est, ad baptisterium ubi uirga Aaron floruit.[5]
>
> *DE SAC.* 4.1–2

> In the Old Testament the priests were accustomed to enter the first tabernacle frequently; the highest priest entered the second tabernacle once a year.... To what does this point? That you may understand what the second tabernacle is, in which the priest introduced you, in which once a year the highest priest is accustomed to enter, that is, the baptistery, where the rod of Aaron flourished.[6]

He continues the analogy by noting how the dried rod of Aaron flourished by miraculous watering in the tabernacle and so too the candidates had been watered in the font; the tabernacle is also the censer and they too now emit 'the good odour of Christ' (*De Sac*. 4.2). The candidates, of course, enter the baptistery only once in their lifetime and, given the attention Ambrose devotes to it,

4 Riley (1974) 48.

5 Botte (1961) 102.

6 Deferrari (1963) 297–298.

we can infer that the building itself was expected to have made a considerable impression upon them. This becomes much more obvious when one notes how often he asks the neophytes to recall the building or what they saw there, and not just to recall what they did and said. He explicitly asks them to consider *where* they received heavenly sacraments, and that Christ and his angels were present, not just the ministers: *Ubi promiseris considera … Considera ubi capias sacramenta caelestia. Si hic corpus est Christi, hic est angeli.* ('Consider where you promised … Consider where you receive the heavenly sacraments. If the body of Christ is here, here too are the angels established'. *De Sac.* 1.6).[7]

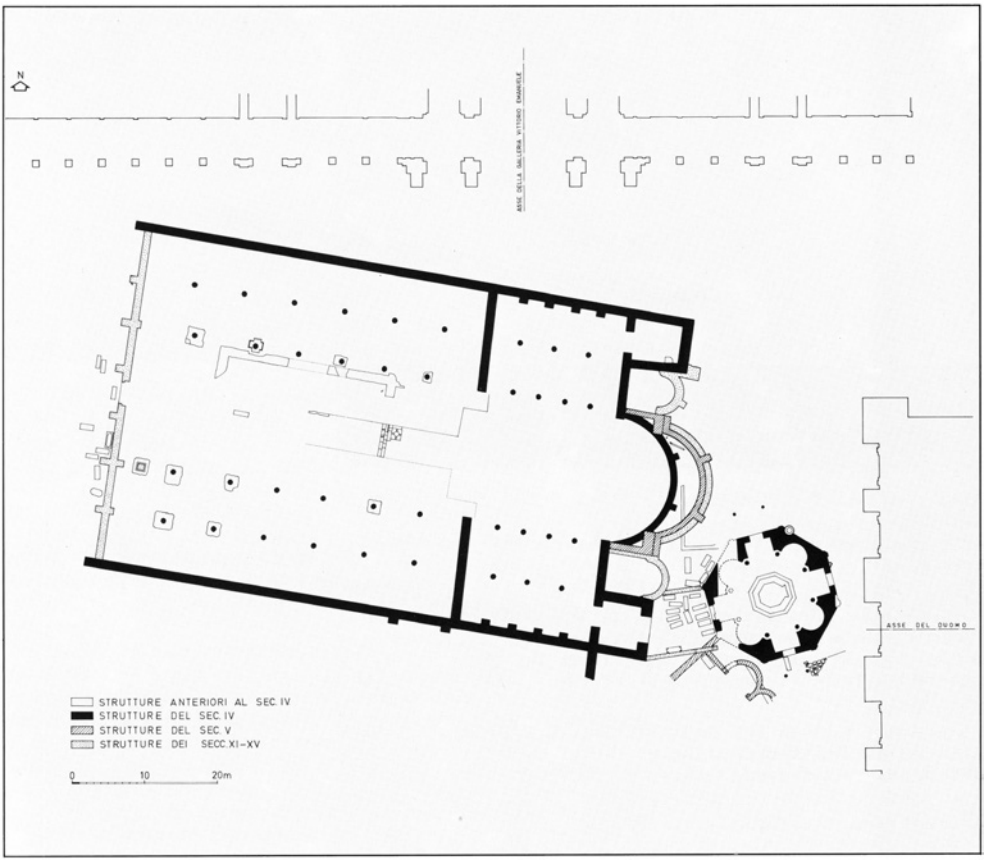


FIGURE 2.1 *Plan of the Basilica of St Tecla* (*the Basilica Nova*) *indicating the position of the baptistery.*
SOURCE: MIRABELLA ROBERTI (1984) 107, FIG. 103; USED WITH PERMISSION FROM THE SOPRINTENDENZA ARCHEOLOGIA DELLA LOMBARDIA.

7 Botte (1961) 64; Deferrari (1963) 271.

Ambrose's cathedral was the so-called Basilica Nova (later dedicated to Santa Tecla) which twentieth century excavations revealed, together with a baptistery, under the Piazza del Duomo in the centre of Milan (see fig. 2.1).[8] The baptistery was a substantial free-standing monument located in a prominent position just a few meters from the east wall of the church and may have been constructed somewhat earlier.[9] Italian cities boast a number of such baptisteries, separate from a cathedral but always in proximity to it. Olof Brandt referred to them as 'propaganda architecture'[10] and Wharton has noted how they were closely linked to the bishop's actual and claimed power in spiritual and political spheres.[11] The Milanese baptistery was octagonal, 19.4 meters across on the outside, giving an interior diameter of 12.8 meters.[12] Robin Jensen has suggested that the space could comfortably hold up to 150 people which may have implications for the way in which the liturgy was conducted.[13] There are no adjacent rooms indicating that the major transition is from outside to inside and not to distinct ritual spaces within the room, there is not even a porch. The plans by Mirabella Roberti show a corridor connecting the baptistery to the basilica, although the archaeology indicates that it was not part of the original structure; however, in our discussion below we shall suggest that this corridor is located at the entrance used by Ambrose's candidates. Not much of the baptistery remains above floor level but given the number of octagonal baptisteries in Italy of the fourth and fifth centuries and the known influence of Milan upon Ravenna, there has been much speculation whether the decorative scheme in the Orthodox baptistery in Ravenna was modelled on that of Milan, especially since Ambrose alludes to a similar decorative pattern in his catecheses.[14] The interior of the baptistery in Milan has eight niches, alternately semi-circular and rectangular with doors placed in the latter which, Mirabella Roberti suggested, had liturgical functions for the entrance of the bishop and catechumens and for their exit to the basilica.[15] The liturgical

8 See Mirabella Roberti and Paredi (1963).

9 Krautheimer (1983) 77.

10 Brandt (2011) 1588.

11 Wharton (1987) 365–369.

12 Roberti (1984) 115.

13 Jensen (2012) 116. The space would permit the candidates to enter en masse and therefore to witness the rituals, administered to others; it might also indicate that a number of baptisms were performed simultaneously.

14 Wharton (1987) 370. See Deliyannis (2010) 88–100 for a detailed description of the Orthodox baptistery in Ravenna.

15 Mirabella Roberti (1984) 115: *Queste devono aver avuto funzione liturgica* (*ingresso del vescovo, ingresso dei catechumeni, e loro uscita dalla parte della basilica*).

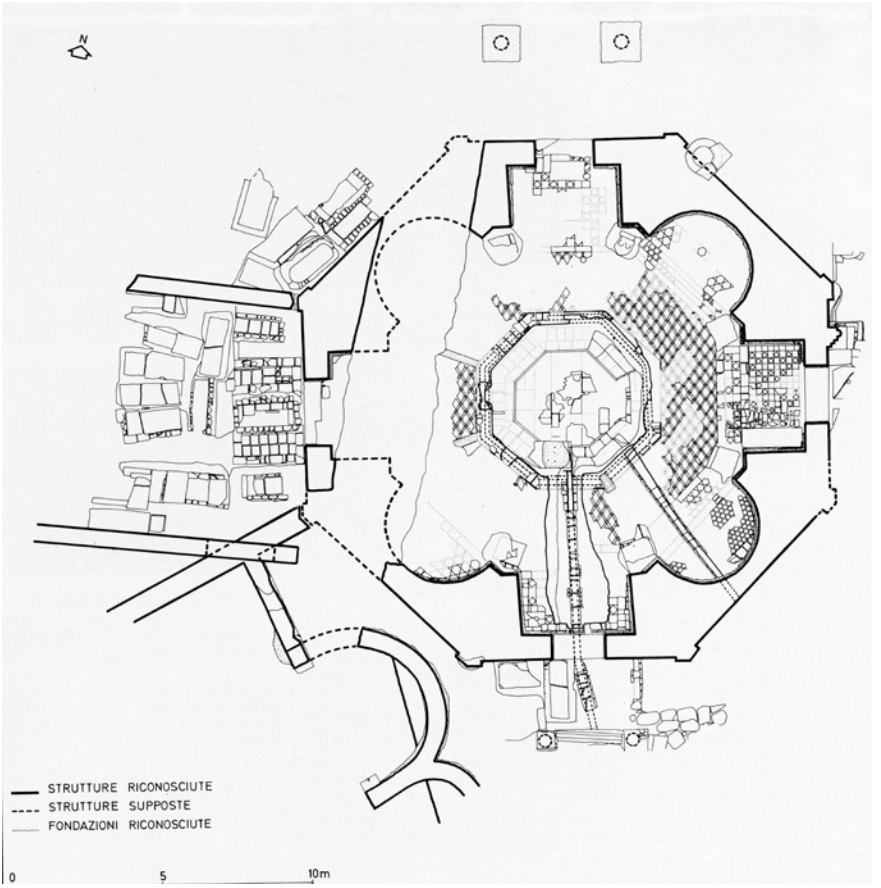


FIGURE 2.2 *Plan of the baptistery of the Basilica Nova indicating the position of the font in relation to the entrances.*
SOURCE: MIRABELLA ROBERTI (1984) 116, FIG. 112; USED WITH PERMISSION FROM THE SOPRINTENDENZA ARCHEOLOGIA DELLA LOMBARDIA.

interpretation below will suggest that the West door must have been the principal entry.

A large octagonal font dominated the interior, which, Ambrose explained, 'in appearance looks something like a tomb' (*cuius species ueluti quaedam sepulchri forma est*) (see fig. 2.2).[16] And such an interpretation might well have been made more explicit in the rest of baptistery as well in the words of a poem attributed to Ambrose in an inscription recorded in the sixteenth century:

16 Ambrose *De Sac.* 3.1 in Botte (1961) 90.

Octachorum sanctos templum surrexit in usus,
Octagonus fons est munere dignus eo.
Hoc numero decuit sacri baptismatis aulam
Surgere quo populis verus salus rediit.
Luce resurgentis Christi qui claustra resolvit
Mortis et tumulis suscitat exanimes.

He raised up a temple with eight niches to holy use,
the font is eight-cornered, which is appropriate for its gift.
With this number it was fitting the hall of holy baptism
to erect, by which true salvation returned to the people.
In the light of the rising Christ, who releases from the prison
of death, and raises up the dead from their graves …[17]

Both Riley and Brandt have commented that the octagonal shape is reminiscent of mausolea, especially imperial mausolea, and one could assume that this impression would not be lost on the candidates, nor even on the non-Christian inhabitants of Milan.[18] In terms of the baptismal candidates' experience Jensen puts it clearly: 'To enter the building was, in fact, to enter a tomb …'[19]

At some unspecified point on Easter Saturday, either during the Vigil or before it, the candidates gathered outside the door of the baptistery with the bishop, presbyters and deacons. Josef Schmitz suggested that after the ritual of the *apertio* (see below) in an outer room that the bishop with his assistants and the catechumens went in procession to the baptistery.[20] Alternatively Satterlee suggested that they may have gathered first in a *catechumeneum* because, he says, in *De Sacramentis* 1.4 'Ambrose reminds the neophytes that they had "arrived" (*venimus*) at the baptistery and went in. This seems to imply that they were at a place other than just outside the baptistery …'[21] I find both these suggestions unlikely: there is no archaeological or textual evidence for any outer room or for a *catechumeneum*, neither does Ambrose mention a procession.

17 This poem was recorded by De Rossi ((1888) vol. 2.1, 161) but no longer exists; English translation in Ferguson (2009) 638, amended.

18 Brandt (2011) 1590; he also suggests a connection with *nymphea* and *frigidaria*. Riley (1974) 247.

19 Jensen (2012) 111.

20 Schmitz (1990) 28 and 30.

21 Satterlee (2002) 157.

Ambrose himself indicates that the first ritual action took place outside the door itself.

It was at the door of the baptistery that the bishop performed the ritual of the *apertio* in which he touched the candidates' ears and nostrils with the words *Effetha, quod est adaperire* (*De Myst.* 1.3). Ambrose justifies this ritual with reference to Christ healing the man who was deaf and unable to speak (Mark 7.33–35); in the gospel, Christ touched his ears, and then spat and touched his tongue saying *Effetha*, and immediately the man could hear and speak normally. Ambrose's ritual is only indirectly imitative of Christ's actions (unlike the immersion): Ambrose explains that this is because he is only Christ's servant and that they are not mute, and that it would not be appropriate for him to touch the lips of women. Yarnold and Botte have disagreed over whether Ambrose imitated Christ more closely by using spittle when he touched the sense organs: Botte assumed Ambrose did not use spittle because he omitted it from his *resumé* of the gospel text, whereas Yarnold considered this an unsafe conclusion and suggested Ambrose avoided the reference because of his 'delicacy', 'the same delicacy which makes him recoil from touching a woman's mouth'.[22] Ambrose attaches great importance to this ritual and for that reason I find it unlikely that he would have omitted such a key element of it, and thus one has to conclude that Ambrose's silence on the matter indicates that it is unlikely that he would have used any substance (neither spittle, nor oil) for the *apertio.* Ambrose emphasizes that the *apertio* is part of the sacramental action of the whole baptismal liturgy; he refers to it as a '*mysterium*' (*De Sac.* 1.2; *De Myst.* 1.4) whose function was to enhance the candidates' participation in and experience of the entire rite, so that *ut uenturus unusquisque ad gratiam quid interrogaretur cognosceret, quid respondere meminisse deberet* ('each one who was advancing to grace would know what was being asked and would remember how to respond', *De Myst*. 1.3).[23]

The *apertio* of the senses is followed immediately by the *apertio* of the baptistery: 'After this the holy of holies was unclosed to you and you entered the sanctuary of rebirth' (*Post haec reserata tibi sunt sancta sanctorum, ingressus es regenerationis sacrarium*, *De Myst.* 2.5).[24] Before they entered, though, the bishop consecrated the font privately (*De Sac.* 1.18); this does not seem to have been done in the presence of the candidates because Ambrose does not explain it here, but during his later explanation of the necessity and efficacy of

22 Botte (1961) 25–26; Yarnold (1970) 455.

23 Botte (1961) 156; Ramsey (1997) 146.

24 Botte (1961) 158; Ramsey (1997) 146.

the water.[25] If this is the case, then it would indicate that the candidates waited outside the closed door of the baptistery for a while, which can only have heightened the anticipation of entry.

The neophytes are specifically urged to fix the first visual and auditory impressions of the place and the rituals upon their minds: 'Consider whom you have seen, what you have said, repeat carefully' (*Considera quos videris, quid locutus sis considera, repete diligenter, De Sac.* 1.4)[26] Wharton, who interpreted the Milanese/Ambrosian rite in the context of Ravenna's Orthodox baptistery, said of the latter that it had an exterior 'of refined proportions but considerable austerity' which did not prepare the candidates for an interior 'that is voluptuous and complexly multi-coloured.'[27] The contrast was to be effective just as much as the ritual movement from outside to in. The coincidence of the imagery of *De Sacramentis* and *De Mysteriis* with the decorative programme at Ravenna is striking and, although it would be unwise to assume they were identical, one can reasonably assume a richly decorated space designed to impress. Nevertheless, when Ambrose asks them *Quid vidisti?* (*De Myst.* 3.8), he reminds them of the spiritual realities:

> Quid uidisti? Aquas utique sed non solas: leuitas illic ministrantes, summum sacerdotem interrogantem et consecrantem. Primum omnium docuit te apostolus non ea contemplanda nobis quae uidentur sed quae non uidentur, quoniam quae uidentur temporalia sunt, quae autem non uidentur aeterna.
>
> What did you see? Water to be sure, but not only that. The levites who were ministering there, and he high priest questioning and consecrating. The first of all things that the Apostle taught you was that we must not contemplate 'what is visible but what is invisible, since what is visible is temporal, whereas what is invisible is eternal.
>
> DE MYST. 3.8[28]

The baptistery is established as a place of cosmic struggle and the movement from outside to inside also moves the candidates into a new field of battle. Ambrose tells them, 'Having entered, then, in order to look upon your

25 Here I disagree with Bonato (1997) 86 who suggested that 'i *competentes* vengono accompagnati al "fonte" battesimale'.

26 Botte (1961) 62; Deferrari (1963) 270.

27 Wharton (1996) 115.

28 Botte (1961) 158; Ramsey (1997) 147, amended.

adversary, who you deemed should be renounced to his face, you turned to the east' (*Ingressus igitur ut aduersarium tuum cerneres cui renuntiandum in os putaris, ad orientum conuerteris*, *De Myst.* 2.7).[29] In *De Mysteriis* the candidates renounce Satan immediately on entering the baptistery; however, *De Sacramentis* indicates that an anointing of the whole body took place before: in 1.4, Ambrose says 'you have entered, you have been anointed' (*ingressus es, unctus es*).[30] Ambrose understands that this anointing makes the candidate 'an athlete of Christ, as if to contend in the contest of this world … where there is struggle, there is a crown. You contend in the world, but you are crowned by Christ' (*De Sac.* 1.4).[31] These crowns are strongly reminiscent of the sequence of apostles holding laurel crowns which surround the lower dome of Ravenna's Orthodox baptistery.[32] Botte implied that this was a whole body anointing because it required two ministers and not just the bishop, and thus was a rather complicated operation.[33] And if it were a whole body anointing, then the candidates would have already removed their clothes, although this matter is passed over in silence in Bonato's otherwise detailed reconstruction of the ritual.[34] The implication is, of course, that they remained naked for the subsequent rituals of the renunciation and adherence.

The silence about the anointing in *De Mysteriis* cannot be easily explained, but both texts are clear that the struggle really begins with the renunciation of the devil. They were asked 'Do you renounce the devil and his works?' and 'Do you renounce the world and its pleasures?' responding both times *Abrenuntio* ('I do renounce').[35] We noted already that in *De Mysteriis* 2.7 Ambrose describes the devil as truly present and Riley comments, 'Ambrose sees a quasi-physical presence of Satan as antagonist in a drama taking place between the door of the baptistery and arrival at the edge of the font itself.'[36] He tells them that angels also witnessed their struggle and thus it does not take place on the

29 Botte (1961) 158; Ramsey (1997) 147.

30 Deferrari (1963) 270; Botte (1961) 62.

31 Deferrari (1963) 270. *Unctus es quasi athleta Christi, quasi luctum huius saeculi lucaturus, … Qui luctatur habet quod speret: ubi certamen, ibi corona. Luctaris in saeculo, sed coronaris a Christo …* Botte (1961) 62.

32 See Wharton (1996) 123.

33 Botte (1961) 26.

34 Bonato (1997) 89–91; Yarnold (1970) 456 suggested that Ambrose's omission of the stripping was another sign of his 'delicacy'.

35 De Sac. 1.5: *Quando te interrogauit: Abrenuntias diabolo et operibus eius, quid respondisti? Abrenuntio. Abrenuntias saeculo et uoluptatibis eius? Quid respondisti? Abrenuntio* Botte (1961) 62.

36 Riley (1974) 49.

temporal plane, as Reider Aasgard has noted: 'In baptism, then, the Christians have been made part of a domain which is inaccessible to others, and which goes beyond the world presented to the senses.'[37] In the analysis at the end of this paper, it will become clear that, although the neophytes are to understand that they have been involved in a cosmic struggle, their memory of it is embodied, it is sensory and emotional, and it is indeed this which Ambrose seeks to anchor in their minds.

Jerusalem

The baptismal liturgy of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem is presented to us most clearly in the *Mystagogical Catecheses* (MC) attributed to Cyril of Jerusalem (350–386), although I have argued that, in their final form, these lectures and the liturgy they describe probably reflect the episcopate of his successor, John.[38] The issue of date and authorship is not so important here, but it would be if we were to further investigate a possible relationship of influence between Milan and Jerusalem.[39] *Mystagogical Catecheses* is, like *De Sacramentis*, a course of post-baptismal instruction during Easter Week to the neophytes and, if Egeria is to be believed, also to those baptized in previous years.[40] Thus, as in Milan, the neophytes experienced their baptism before having been instructed on its significance, and the pedagogical reasons for this are made clear:

> It has long been my wish, true-born and long-desired children of the Church, to discourse to you upon these spiritual, heavenly mysteries. On the principle, however, that seeing is believing, I delayed until the present occasion, calculating that after what you saw on that night I should find you a readier audience now when I am to be your guide to the brighter and more fragrant meadows of this second Eden. In particular, you are now capable of understanding the diviner mysteries of divine, life-giving baptism. The time being now come to spread for you the board of more

37 Aasgard (2010) 1262.

38 See Day (2007a) 138–140.

39 On this, see Yarnold (1975) 184–189; Botte (1961) 36–40; Piédagnel (2004) 73–74 and the discussion in Satterlee (2002) 214–216.

40 *Itinerarium Egeriae* 47.1.

> perfect instruction, let me explain the significance of what was done for you on that evening of your Baptism.
>
> MC 1.1[41]

Here again we find that experience of the rites forms the basis for the instruction, and we should therefore anticipate an appeal to candidates' memories of the ritual words and actions which, if faulty, will be rectified by the instruction, as well as to the memory of their emotional response to what took place.

Although the *Mystagogical Catecheses* do not focus on the baptistery in the same way as Ambrose does, location and movement are used to structure the explanation of the rites, with particular emphasis upon the extensive rituals outside. The mystagogy proper begins by reminding the candidates that, 'first you went to the *proaulios* of the baptismal building': Εἰσῄειτε πρῶτον εἰς τὸν προαύλιον τοῦ βαπτίσματος οἶκον, … (MC 1.2).[42] There has been much debate about what and where this *proaulios* was, and this is further complicated by the difficulty of locating the baptistery itself and thus its internal arrangements.[43] Traditionally, that is before any scientific archaeology of the site, the baptistery was identified as having been beneath the three eleventh century chapels to the south of the church (see fig. 2.3). Coüasnon, following Conant, for example, suggested that the three chapels to the south of the basilica should be identified as the location for the three main liturgical units, which conveniently follow the division of the liturgy into the three lectures of the *Mystagogical Catecheses*: the first room for the renunciation and adherence, the second containing the font for the water ritual, and then the third where the chrismation and robing could take place.[44] Such a reconstruction of the spatial arrangements of the rite has significant implications for interpreting the *proaulios*, which should then be understood as the corridor running the entire width of these rooms giving access to the street/forum as well as to each of the rooms.

This view still has adherents: Annabel Wharton, for example, argues that, like other late antique baptisteries, the Jerusalem baptistery reflected the prominence of the see:

> If the present baptistery represents the fourth-century structure, it was allotted a particularly prominent site. It directly abutted Aelia's public

41 MC1.1; Stephenson (1970) 153.

42 Piédagnel (2004) 84.

43 For my earlier discussion of this problem, see Day (1999).

44 Coüasnon (1974) 46–50; Conant (1956) 12 and 44.

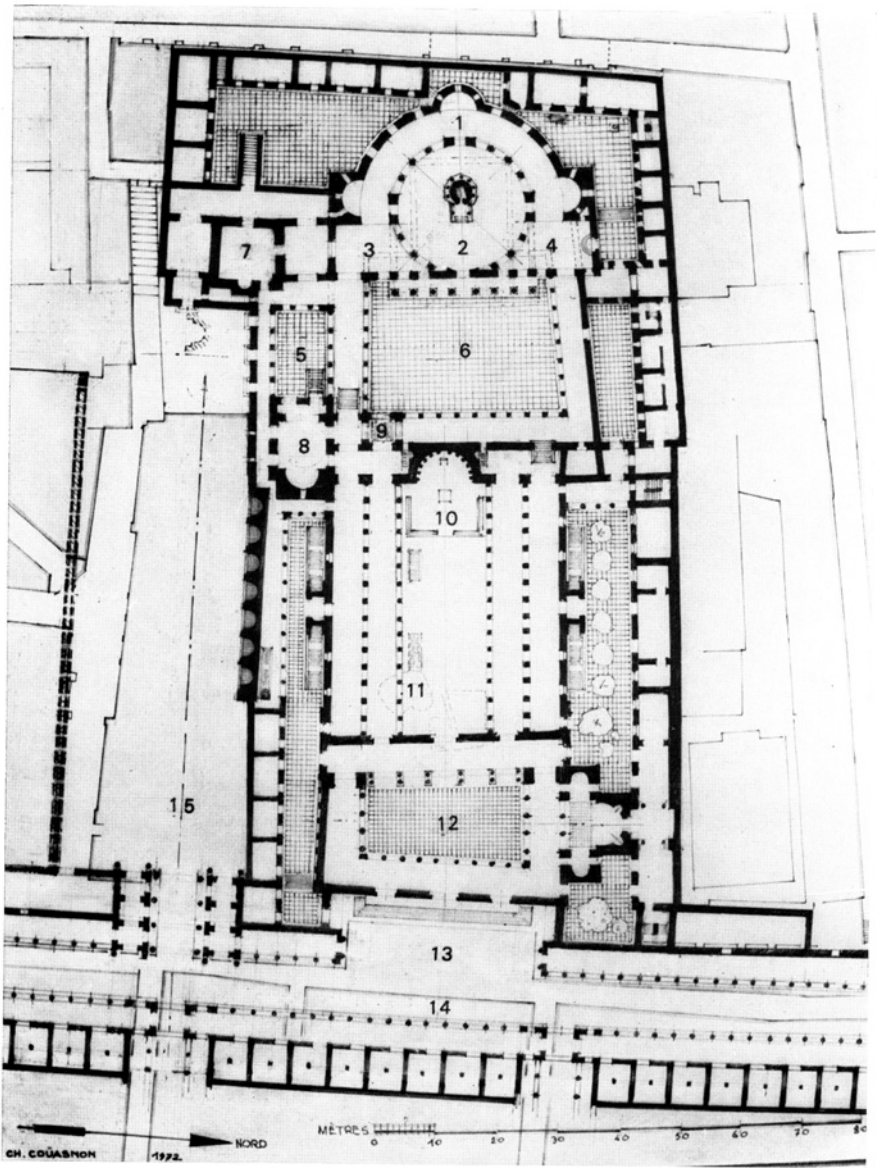


FIGURE 2.3 *Plan of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre according to Charles Coüasnon.* [*Before the scientific archaeology of Tinelli and Corbo the baptistery was thought to have been located in the three chapels to the south of the Rotunda* (*marked as number 7*).] SOURCE: COÜASNON (1974) PLATE VIII; USED WITH PERMISSION FROM OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS.

> center and stood on the axis established by the great Hadrianic arch marking the east entrance of the forum. It would thus have occupied a position as conspicuous as that of the baptisteries of the other great fourth- and fifth-century foundations.[45]

Doval also surveyed the same evidence and the interpretations and, although he does not seem to arrive at a clear conclusion, he suggests that a prominent baptistery would have been part of Constantine's original plans. He cites the Pilgrim of Bordeaux (*Itinerarium Burdigalense*) who saw a baptistery in 333, even before the construction of the Rotunda around the Sepulchre (the Anastasis), and the sixth century Madaba Map which shows a large structure adjoining the south of the Anastasis.[46]

Although I accept Wharton's assertion may be valid for Milan, in Jerusalem the bishop's prestige was linked with the holy sites, most particularly those located in his very own cathedral; he had no need for a monumental baptistery. Moreover, the literary and archaeological evidence indicates that the baptistery was located to the north of the Anastasis in the *patriarchion* buildings. The Pilgrim of Bordeaux describes the western area of the Holy Sepulchre complex from a position in the second atrium: on the left he sees the hill of Golgotha, next the Sepulchre itself and lastly he describes the Martyrium which has 'at its side cisterns from which the water is raised and a bath behind in which the "infants" are washed.'[47] The archaeological reports of Corbo and Tinelli appear to corroborate the *Itinerarium Burgidalense* and provide more concrete evidence for the baptistery being located on the northern side because that is where a baptismal font had been discovered, as well as a threshold with a section of Constantinian mosaic pavement and a large cistern with a 'baptismal inscription'.[48] Vincent had suggested that the large quadrilobe font, whose existence was known from the sixteenth century, had been removed to the north of the Rotunda from a supposedly original position to the south;

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45 Wharton (1992) 322.

46 Doval (1993) 6. Doval subsequently undermines his argument by suggesting that at the time of MC, which he dates to between 382–384 ((2001): 75–79), there may well not have been a dedicated baptistery.

47 *A sinistra autem parte est monticulus golgotha, ubi dominus crucifixus est. Inde quasi ad lapidem missum est cripta, ubi corpus eius positum fuit et tertia die resurrexit; ibidem modo iussu constantini imperatoris basilica facta est, id est dominicum, mirae pulchritudinis, habens ad latus excepturia unde aqua levatur, et balneum a tergo ubi infantes lavantur*, in *Itinerarium Burdigalense* 594, ed. Geyer (1898) 22–23. English translation in Stewart (1896) 23.

48 Corbo (1981) vol. 1, 132–134; Tinelli (1973) 95; Day (1999) 21–24.

however, Tinelli finds it unlikely that a monolithic font of such dimensions could have been transported and concludes that it is at or near its original location.[49] Additional support for this conclusion comes from the discovery of a large cistern in the northern area which contains an inscription from Ps. 3.28—ΦΩΝΗ Κ(υριου) ΕΠΙ ΤΩΝ ΥΔΑΤΩΝ—a psalm used for epiphany and baptismal liturgies, although it does not occur in the *Mystagogical Catecheses*.[50] Tinelli concluded that because of the direct connection between this verse and the baptismal liturgy, that the cistern must have been in the vicinity of the baptistery (*Se si accetta la teoria di una stretta relazione del versetto con la liturgia battesimale dobbiamo logicamente porre la cisterna nelle immediate vicinanze del battistero* …).[51] Thus the only location for the baptistery is in the grounds of the *patriarchion*, even if this appears to be rather modest in comparison to the majesty of the rest of the Holy Sepulchre complex. Tinelli also noted, following Bagatti, that Palestinian baptisteries were normally incorporated into the church buildings.[52] What neither he nor Corbo indicate, though, is how a baptistery with *proaulios* might have been located in the area of the *patriarchion*, even though they suggested a location for the font and know the location of the Constaninian mosaic pavement and threshold (fig. 2.4).

The candidates were reminded, Εἰσῆειτε πρῶτον εἰς τὸν προαύλιον τοῦ βαπτίσματος οἶκον ('First you went to the *proaulios* of the baptismal building': MC 1.2), and after explaining the preliminary rituals the mystagogue again refers to this space: Ταῦτα ἐν τῷ ἐξωτέρῳ ἐγίνετο οἴκῳ … ('These things happened outside the building …').[53] *Proaulios* may be a forecourt, implying a reasonably open space outside the building, or an antechamber implying a more enclosed space connected to the building.[54] Of the modern commentators and translators most seem to interpret it as an enclosed space—as a room or vestibule.[55] If they are right, then the Holy Sepulchre baptistery should be compared to

49 Vincent and Abel (1926) 138; Tinelli (1973) 96.

50 Tinelli (1973) 98.

51 Tinelli (1973) 98.

52 Bagatti (1971) 303–305; Tinelli (1973) 101.

53 MC 1.11; Piédagnel (2004) 102. It is also used figuratively to refer to candidates' enrollment for baptism in *Procatechesis* 1, which is reliably attributed to Cyril of Jerusalem: Ἤδη περὶ τὸ προαύλιον τῶν βασιλείων γεγόνατε· γένοιτο δὲ καὶ ὑπὸ τοῦ βασιλέως εἰσαχθῆτε (PG 33, 332–333).

54 PGL, q.v. προάυλιος: 'before a court or a house'; (1) an out-building, (2) a forecourt, antechamber.

55 Doval (1993) 2. Doval suggested that Εἰσῆειτε 'implies that it is an enclosed area'; Piédagnel (2004) 84 n.2 that it was a vestibule like the *pronaos* of the Lateran; Yarnold translates it as 'outer room' (1994) 70; Röwekamp (1992) 97 as a 'Vorhalle'. The term seems rarely used, but

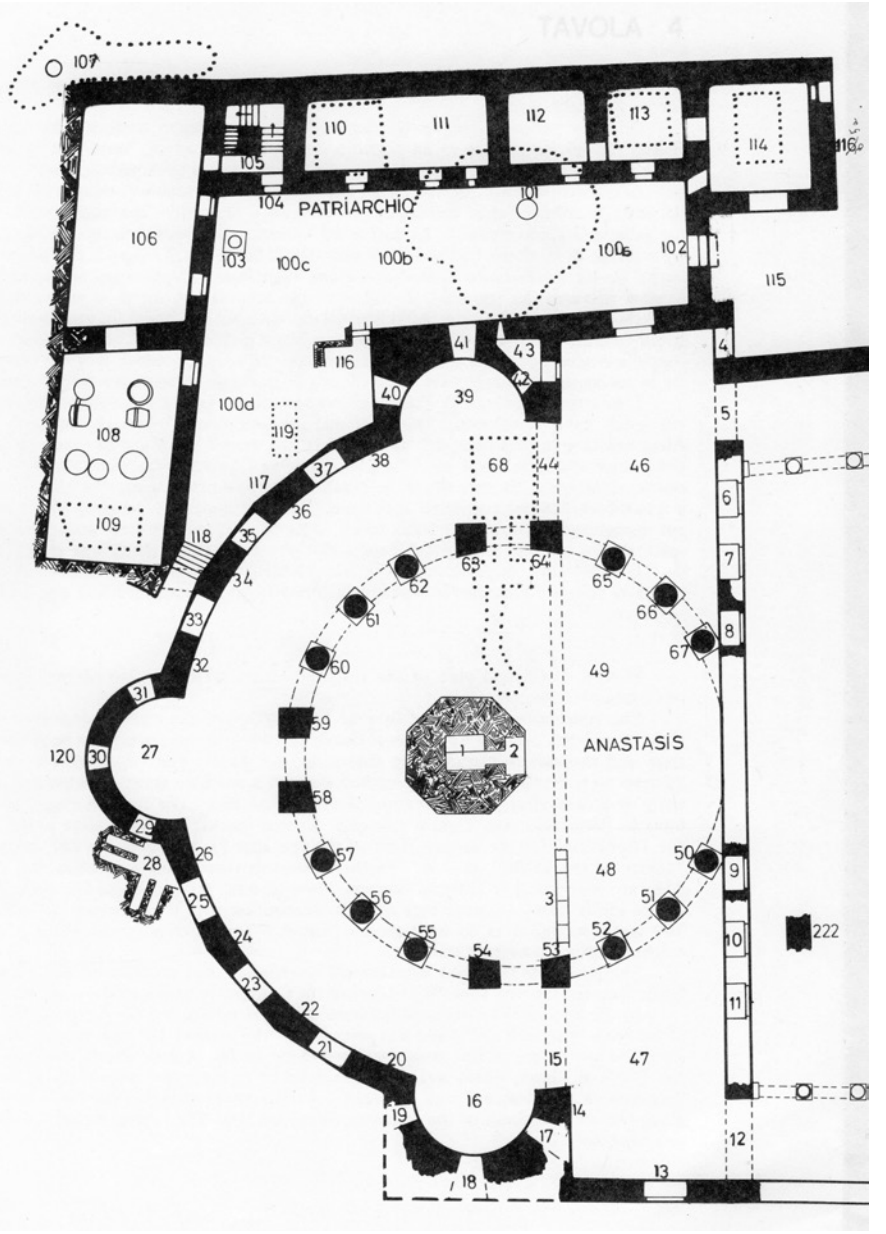


FIGURE 2.4 *Plan of the Constantinian structures of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the Anastasis.* [*Here detail of the Anastasis (Rotunda) and Patriarchion. The cistern is no. 103 in the plan; the font was found in sector 100 and the traces of a threshold at 116 may be related to the baptistery.*]
SOURCE: CORBO (1981) PARTE 2, TAVOLA 3; COURTESY OF THE STUDIUM BIBLICUM FRANCISCANUM, JERUSALEM.

other two-room Palestinian baptisteries which are directly attached to the basilica, e.g. at Dora or Nicopolis.[56] It is strange that the *Mystagogical Catecheses* use a rare and imprecise term for this space; although what he meant would have been clear to his listeners! There were other perfectly usable words to describe a transitional space like this, *pronaos* or *stoa*, but one wonders if the preacher avoided these because of their connection to pagan temples and the Jewish Temple in order to further assert Christian dominance over a previously Jewish and then pagan city?[57] *Proaulion* does, however, occur once in the New Testament in Mark 14: Peter warmed himself by the fire ἐν τῇ αὐλῇ (in the *aula*) where he betrays Christ, and he then goes εἰς τὸ προαύλιον (to the *proaulios*) where he hears the cock crow (Mark 14.67–68). Neither of these are enclosed spaces and *proaulios* here must simply mean the space in front of, or entrance to, the *aula*. Did the mystagogue choose to use this term for the area in front of the baptistery because of the New Testament precedent? It would certainly fit his emphasis upon this location being a similar place of choice for or against Christ and would fit the monumentalisation of the Passion elsewhere in the Holy Sepulchre complex. The *proaulios*, therefore, may not necessarily have been a room, although it was a clearly demarcated, but open, space: a portico, which would have been somewhat modest given the restricted surroundings of the *patriarchion*. In my *Baptismal Liturgy of Jerusalem*, I had concluded that a 'porch' indicated that the rituals there were 'very likely to have been a public act',[58] but I now wish to change my opinion and suggest that, although the *proaulios* was open on at least one side, it was not in public space and this becomes clear when contrasted with the very public *apertio* in Milan.

Unlike Milan, in Jerusalem the candidates began the cosmic struggle against evil in this liminal space. The neophytes are reminded: 'First you entered the *proaulios* of the baptistery, and facing west, you heard and were commanded to stretch out [your] hand and you renounced Satan, as if he were present' (Εἰσήειτε πρῶτον εἰς τὸν προαύλιον τοῦ βαπτίσματος οἶκον, καὶ πρὸς τὰς δυσμὰς ἑστῶτες ἠκούετε καὶ προσετάττεσθε ἐκτείνειν τὴν χεῖρα, καὶ ὡς παρόντι ἀπετάττεσθε τῷ Σατανᾷ.[59] MC 1.2). The words of the renunciation were given to them clause by clause and they repeated them:

Gregory of Nyssa does refer to τὸ προαύλιον in *Vita Macrinae* 33 which Maraval understood as a 'vestibule' (1971) 248–249.

56 See Röwekamp (1992) 23; also Day (1999) 24–27.

57 Josephus used στοά for the colonnaded portico of the Temple, see Josephus *AJ* 8.96.

58 Day (2007a) 49.

59 Piédagnel (2004) 84.

Ἀλλ' ὅμως ἀκούεις τεταμένῃ τῇ χειρὶ ὡς πρὸς παρόντα εἰπεῖν· «Ἀποτάσσομαί σοι, Σατανᾶ.»
Εἶτα ἐν δευτέρᾳ λέξει μανθάνεις λέγειν· «Καὶ πᾶσι τοῖς ἔργοις σου.»
Εἶτα λέγεις· «Καὶ πάσῃ τῇ πομπῇ αὐτοῦ.»
Μετὰ ταῦτα λέγεις· «Καὶ τῇ λατρείᾳ σου.»

You heard [the instruction to stretch your hand and to say as if he were present, 'I renounce you Satan'
Then, in the second phrase you are taught to say, 'and all your works'
Then you say, 'and all your pomp'
After these, you say 'and all your service'[60]

Such a manner of slow repetition was intended no doubt to emphasize the act of renunciation, to imprint it on their minds and to increase the dramatic tension; this, accompanied by the specific orientation and the hand stretched out in a gesture of rejection, indicates clearly that the ritual was intended to touch them intellectually, emotionally and physically. The candidates then turned east to repeat in a single sentence the words of the adherence: 'I believe in the Father and in the Son and in the Holy Spirit and in one baptism of repentance.' (Τότε σοι ἐλέγετο εἰπεῖν· Πιστεύω εἰς τὸν Πατέρα καὶ εἰς τὸν Υἱὸν καὶ εἰς τὸ ἅγιον Πνεῦμα καὶ εἰς ἓν βάπτισμα μετανοίας).[61]

The interpretation of these rituals given in the mystagogy was not apparent to the candidates during the ritual, but afterwards the rich scriptural and theological images combined with the embodied memory, so that they would not just recall the dramatic events of the ritual, but would also situate themselves within the key dramatic events in salvation history. Thus their turning west then east is explained thus: 'The west is the place where darkness appears, and he being darkness, his dominion is in darkness and for this sake having symbolically looked towards the west, you have renounced that dark and gloomy ruler' (MC 1.4). Then, having broken the contract with Satan, 'there is opened to you the gate of Paradise', which is the east, 'the place of light'. Problematically for the mystagogue the Holy Sepulchre complex is orientated to the west—therefore to turn west was also to turn towards the Tomb itself. And, when they turned east 'towards Paradise', they must have been facing towards the baptistery itself, because in the explanation of their nakedness 'Paradise' is used as a metaphor for the baptistery itself. The mystagogue sets up a parallelism between Adam's nakedness in Paradise and their own during the immersion:

60 MC 1.4, 5, 6 and 8; Piédagnel (2004) 88, 92 and 94.

61 MC 1.9; Piédagnel (2004) 99.

> Ὢ θαυμασίου πράγματος· γυμνοὶ ἦτε ἐν ὄψεσι πάντων, καὶ οὐκ ἠσχύνεσθε. Ἀληθῶς γὰρ μίμημα ἐφέρετε τοῦ πρωτοπλάστου Ἀδάμ, ὃς ἐν τῷ παραδείσῳ γυμνὸς ἦν καὶ οὐκ ἠσχύνετο.
>
> What a wonderful thing! You were naked in the eyes of all and felt no shame. In fact you were imitating the first man Adam, who was 'naked' in Paradise 'but not ashamed.'[62]
>
> MC 2.2

Thus, it seems very clear that the baptistery had the opposite orientation to the rest of the complex and that the ritual symbolism and the mystagogy of east and west overruled the logic of the site.

The Exodus narrative is used to illustrate the dramatic nature of the renunciation: Satan is like the pharaoh from whom the Hebrews fled in fear of their lives, but who are saved by the waters of the sea. Typologically the neophytes have participated in the great moments of salvation history presented by the Exodus and by Christ: Moses was sent—Christ was sent; Moses led the people to safety—Christ rescued his people; the blood of the passover lamb turned away the destroyer—the blood of Christ, the Lamb of God, protects from evil (MC 1.2–3). Thus their memory of this highly charged and embodied ritual is altered or enhanced by connecting it to these foundational biblical events.

Although nothing is said of the movement into the baptismal room it is made clear that the transition is from ordinary space to sacred space. At the end of the first mystagogical lecture, they were reminded, 'These events took place in the outer room. God willing, when in our next explanations of the mysteries we enter the Holy of Holies, we shall learn the meaning of the rites which were celebrated there' (Ταῦτα ἐν τῷ ἐξωτέρῳ ἐγίνετο οἴκῳ. Θεοῦ δὲ θέλοντος, ὅταν ἐν ταῖς ἑξῆς μυσταγωγίαις εἰς τὰ ἅγια τῶν ἁγίων εἰσέλθωμεν, ἐκεῖ εἰσόμεθα τῶν αὐτόθι ἐπιτελουμένων τὰ σύμβολα. MC 1.11).[63] Piédagnel suggested that Holy of Holies did not refer to a specific place, but that it refers to the mysteries of baptism;[64] however, Röwekamp disagreed, saying that it should be understood as both as the baptistery and the Mysteries which took place there.[65] Unlike Ambrose though, the mystagogue does not elaborate on temple imagery or refer to high priests and levites, possibly because of the contested religious identity of Jerusalem. The interpretation rests upon αὐτόθι

62 Piédagnel (2004) 106.

63 Piédagnel (2004) 102.

64 Piédagnel (2004) 103 n. 2.

65 Röwekamp (1992) 28 n. 94.

(on the spot, there, in the very place);[66] this indicates precision about the location and does not refer simply to the mystery of the rituals which took place inside the baptismal room. Additionally, we need to take note of the previous sentence which explicitly refers to outside the baptistery and of the opening words of the second lecture which announce that they will now hear about what took place ἐν τῷ ἐσωτέρῳ … οἴκῳ ('inside the building' MC 2.1).[67]

Once inside the baptistery, they immediately removed their clothes: Εὐθύς γ'οὖν εἰσελθόντες, ἀπεδύεσθε τὸν χιτῶνα· καὶ τοῦτο ἦν εἰκὼν τοῦ τὸν παλαιὸν ἄνθρωπον ἀπεκδύσασθαι σὺν ταῖς πράξεσιν ('As soon as you entered, you took off your tunic, to show that you were putting off the old man with his deeds.' MC 2.2).[68] The mystagogue paraphrases Col. 3.9 almost exactly, but whereas in Colossians the 'taking off' (ἀποδύεσθαι) is only metaphorical, in our context it is both real and metaphorical. The preacher plays on this double sense: the old tunic is linked to the presence of evil powers but, to avoid confusion, he states that he does not mean their actual tunic. The recreation of a new person begins here in the baptistery, 'in Paradise', with the removal of clothing after the necessary preconditions have been established outside.

Ritual, Memory and Identity

The key starting point for our analysis of the rituals at the door of the baptisteries in Milan and Jerusalem is that ritual elements through embodiment—both physical and emotional—are not primarily to be received cognitively. One could extend that to the whole baptismal rite, but here the focus is on how the process of salvation is embodied at the specific point of entry into the baptistery. These rituals can only take place in the actual context of the baptistery and either side of its door. Both mystagogies clearly indicate that the place participates in generating appropriate feelings in the participants, but these are to be interpreted in light of authoritative teaching and the candidates are not left to interpret any of it freely.

Davies makes a distinction, not his own, between feelings that are prompted unannounced from our subconscious, and emotions which are socially constructed forms of these feelings.[69] He also discusses the power of 'expected

66 PGL q.v. αὐτόθι, αὐτοῦ.

67 Piédagnel (2004) 104.

68 Piédagnel (2004) 104–106; Yarnold (2000) 173.

69 Davies (2011) 16: 'Emotions are socially named feelings used by human groups to help stimulate, direct, and control "feelings".'

emotions', and we suggest that these spatially located rituals anticipated an emotional response from the participants driven by community traditions about what happens at the baptistery and attested by the personal transformations which take place there seen most visibly every Easter week as the white-robed neophytes took a prominent place in the church's continued celebrations of the Resurrection. These expected emotions would be reinforced by constant preaching about how the lack of baptism is a spiritual and social disadvantage. The decision to be baptized reflects a personal feeling of incompleteness, the search for a resolution to the perceived chaos at cosmic, communal and personal levels. By bringing this to resolution, the participant is able to forge a new identity.

The role of memory is also very important: rituals do not only make an impact during participation, but they also imprint powerful memories of the emotional and physical response they generate. Post-baptismal catechesis trusts that the required emotions have indeed been generated by the rites. It validates them by connecting them to the church's narrative of salvation, but it also modifies them so that the memory of them conforms to the community's authoritative value and belief system. Thus the experience is placed within the authoritative scriptural narratives and the ritual actions imitate in some way those of Moses or Christ, with whom the candidate is invited to identify. The newly-baptized are to understand themselves as participating in this new narrative, which supersedes or extends the personal narrative by which they have identified themselves up to now.[70] Successful ritual participation validates the new identity within the community.

At the door of the baptistery we see this played out very clearly. The baptistery itself is particularly set apart. It is opened only once a year and entry is restricted to a privileged few. In Milan it occupied a prominent position in the city, and was designed to enhance episcopal and ecclesial power in the political and spiritual realm. And if indeed it is legitimate to consider that the Orthodox baptistery in Ravenna was modelled on that of Milan, then we must also remark on the monumentality and austerity of the exterior, which is to be contrasted with the extraordinary exuberance of the interior. Of course both are designed to elicit emotional responses—awe, wonder, pleasure—as the candidates pass through the door. Designating the baptistery as the 'Holy of Holies' which now, through Christ, can be entered by those joining the 'royal priesthood', will engender feelings of privilege, but the rituals surrounding this entry are designed to provoke humble gratitude and not pride.

70 See Day (2007b).

The rituals at the door compliment the response to entry. In Milan the *apertio* expressly prepares the candidate for the sensory, embodied experience as they go in. As they cross into the sacred space they have already indicated their intention to reject the values of the world outside the church, and the words of the renunciation reinforce this. The words of the renunciation are fearful and Satan, the source of evil, is confronted personally by the candidates. The renunciation and adherence set up the conflicting emotions of fear followed by a sense of safety and relief. The verbal declaration is embodied by turning, I suggest to look back out through the door, and then to turn again to look at the richly decorated interior and the font. The adherence is made in a place of safety and this permits the removal of clothes immediately afterwards, a socially unacceptable action in public under normal circumstances and likely to cause embarrassment and vulnerability. It is an embodied way of reinforcing the change of identity as they put off the old man with his deeds and put on the new.

In Jerusalem we have noted a fairly similar ritual structure, but closer attention to the role of the door indicates an interesting difference. In our interpretation the baptistery is not located in a public space but within the cathedral complex, this means that the key rituals of renunciation and adherence can take place outside the 'Holy of Holies'. The *proaulios* is liminal space where the contest between Satan and Christ can still occur and so the outcome of the decision to reject Satan is not necessarily a forgone conclusion. In Jerusalem, entry into the baptistery is only for those who have definitively re-orientated their lives, whereas in Milan the *apertio* establishes just the potential for re-orientation. In Jerusalem, the removal of clothes operates in a similar way, as the preacher tells them 'you were naked in front of everyone and you were not ashamed' (MC 2.2).

Whitehouse has made a distinction between emotionally charged religious experiences which happen once and are considered to be transformative, and doctrinally led transformations which occur through formal educative programmes.[71] But in mystagogy these two combine. The baptismal candidates arrive at the baptistery anticipating a highly charged emotional and transformative event, but they are left to simply experience the rituals and the feelings they arouse—at this point they are not being controlled by authoritative interpretations. Davies' distinction between feelings and emotions is useful here: in mystagogy the feelings are directed into validated and normative emotions as the rites are explained. The bishops directly address the embodied memory of the candidates and harness it for authoritative theological and ecclesial

71 Whitehouse (2004), in Davies (2011) 65.

meanings. The unreflected feelings are thereby diverted into emotions which are normative in the Christian community: fear of Satan and evil in the world is transformed by Christ's victory and by their ritual participation in it. In giving theological value to their feelings and actions, mystagogy modifies their memory so that in the future the newly baptized will recall the interpretation and not just the event. Their memory is primarily embodied, but secondarily doctrinal or intellectual; in whatever situations in the future recall of one should bring recall of the other. Seeing a sunset, feeling fear, hearing about Satan can arouse the authoritative memory of the rituals so that they are connected to their self-understanding as people of the light, of love and peace and of Christ. In this way the rituals at the door of the baptistery become foundational in their new identity as Christians.

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Abbreviations

MC Mystagogical Catecheses, attributed to Cyril of Jerusalem (350–386).

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PGL G.W.H. Lampe (1961–1968) *Patristic Greek Lexicon.* Oxford.

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CHAPTER 3

From Taboo to Icon

The Entrance to and the Exit from the Church in the First Three Greek Liturgical Commentaries (ca 500–730 CE)

Christian Boudignon

In a letter to pope Siricius, Ambrose of Milan wrote in 389 CE:

> But what is that *gate of the sanctuary*, that *outward gate which looketh towards the East, which remains shut, and no man*, it is said, *shall enter in by it but the Lord, the God of Israel* (Ezech. 44:1–2). Is not Mary this gate, by whom the Saviour entered into the world?[1]

Could it be that in late antique Christian liturgy in the Greek East the external doors of the church were also seen as the womb of a pregnant woman who gives birth to those who pass through them? This chapter focusses on the experience of entering the church in the first three liturgical commentaries of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite (ca 500 CE), Maximus the Confessor (ca 626 CE) and the Constantinopolitan patriarch Germanus I (ca 715–730 CE).[2] My analysis will be based on the statement of Van Gennep's that 'it will be easy to show that the ritual of the Mass also constitutes a sequence of rites of separation, transition and incorporation.'[3] In fact, it is not as easy as Van Gennep would have believe, and as far as I know, nobody has tried to show this for the late antique Christian liturgy in the Greek East.

Roughly speaking, there are two entrances: the first one at the beginning when the high priest enters the nave, the second one when the catechumens[4] are dismissed and the holy gifts are transferred to the altar. In medieval Greek liturgy, after an evolution of the rites, the first will become known as the *Little Entrance* and the second as the *Great Entrance.*

For a better understanding of what it means to enter a late antique Christian sanctuary, I propose to discuss those first three liturgical commentaries. In

1 Ambrose of Milan, *Ep.* 42: 6, English translation Walford (1881) 284.

2 This attribution to Germanus I remains hypothetical, although it has been defended by Bornert (1966) 142–160.

3 Van Gennep (1960) 96.

4 Catechumens are those preparing for baptism.

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no way do I want to propose a remake of the well-known historical study of Taft (1978) *The Great Entrance. A History of the Transfer of Gifts and Other Preanaphoral Rites of the Liturgy of St John Chrysostom*. Yet, some details of his reconstruction are now being doubted.[5] Pseudo-Dionysius' commentary seems to refer to the Antiochene liturgy,[6] whereas Maximus seems to speak of the Mass of Jerusalem (if he ever deals with a specific Mass …), and Germanus mirrors the Constantinopolitan liturgy.

The Entrances in Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite

The first Christian liturgical commentary is the *Ecclesiastica Hierarchia* (hereafter *EC*), written around 500 CE and transmitted under the false name of Dionysius the Areopagite. It deals with six Christian rites, from baptism to funeral: Baptism, Eucharist, Confirmation, sacerdotal Consecration, monastic Consecration and Funeral. The third chapter is about the liturgy of the Eucharist. The church is divided into two parts: the 'altar' (*thysiastērion*), that is the space for the clergy around the altar, and the nave or 'sacred precincts' (*hiera periokhē*) reserved for the laity.

First Entrance of the High Priest

There is no mention of entrances from outside the church in the third chapter of the *Ecclesiastica Hierarchia*. All sanctity comes from the high priest at the altar, and then a movement of sanctification spreads from the altar to the nave. The faithful remain where they are and experience the sanctification from the altar to the nave through the entrance of the high priest, inside the church.

At the beginning of the liturgy, the high priest is already standing at the altar. What happened before, we don't know. The entrance from the high priest into the nave and his return to the altar is, first, explained as the symbol of the 'divine goodness' (ἀγαθότητι θείᾳ)[7] that spreads to the faithful and then returns to his former unity. Probably the high priest passed through the chancel barriers (although they are not explicitly mentioned). The interpretation

5 Taft (1978) 43–45 (after Bornert (1966) 105–110) assumes that Maximus the Confessor witnesses the Constantinopolitan liturgy. But if he was Palestinian, as I defended (Boudignon 2004), he would rather have been a witness of the Hagiopolitan liturgy.

6 Fiori (2011) 41 n. 33, insists on the proximity of Dionysius to the Antiochene liturgical tradition, after Scazzoso (1965 and 1967). Bornert (1966) 66 n. 4, already admitted that this liturgy followed the Syrian ritual, after Stiglmayer (1909).

7 Heil and Ritter (1991) 82, 18.

of this entrance is typical of the hieratical philosophy of Pseudo-Dionysius: sanctity descends from the angelic orders to the high priest (the bishop), then to the priests and the deacons, and finally to the laity. So in that perspective, it comes as no surprise that the first entrance is from the altar, and not from outside the church, since the outside cannot deliver any sanctification in this philosophy, but on the contrary, is the realm of sin.

Dismissal of Catechumens, the Possessed and Penitents

The second movement through the doors in the middle of the Mass (the dismissal of catechumens, energumens[8] and penitents) is fully explained. Pseudo-Dionysius gives first a short description of the Mass ritual, and then a long *theoria* or contemplation and explanation of the liturgy. In the short description, he writes (*EC* 3.2):

> καὶ μετὰ ταύτας ἔξω γίνονται τῆς ἱερᾶς περιοχῆς οἱ κατηχούμενοι καὶ πρὸς αὐτοῖς οἱ ἐνεργούμενοι καὶ οἱ ἐν μετανοίᾳ ὄντες, μένουσι δὲ οἱ τῆς τῶν θείων ἐποψίας καὶ κοινωνίας ἄξιοι.
>
> After those [readings], the catechumens leave the sacred precincts, followed by the possessed, and the penitents, so that only those remain who are entitled to the vision and communion of the divine things.[9]

In the long *theoria* or contemplation that follows, the catechumens are compared to foetuses in the womb. It is a very important passage, to which too little attention has been paid. Had they passed through the gate and entered the church at this moment, they would have been like untimely born foetuses (*EC* 3.6):

> ὥσπερ οὖν εἰ ἀτέλεστα καὶ ἀμόρφωτα προεκπέσοι τὰ κατὰ σάρκα βρέφη τῆς οἰκείας μαιεύσεως, ὡς ἀμβλωθρίδια καὶ ἐκτρώματα τὴν ἀγέννητον καὶ ἄζωον καὶ ἀφώτιστον ἐπὶ γῆς ἀπόπτωσιν ἔξει (…)
>
> It is just as when children of the flesh arrive before their proper incubation. They are unready and unshaped like still-born foetuses. They fall to earth unborn, without life, without light (…)[10]

8 'Energumens' are those subject to exorcisms.

9 Heil and Ritter (1991) 80, 13–16. The translation here and below is taken from Luibhéid (1987), with minor changes.

10 Heil and Ritter (1991) 85, 11–13.

Since van Gennep[11] and Turner,[12] this comparison with aborted birth and death may seem classical for us: 'Thus *liminality* is frequently likened to death, to being in the womb …' This comparison refers only to the second step of the threefold structure discovered by van Gennep and Turner:[13] separation, marginality or *liminality*, and aggregation or *communitas*. In addition, the danger of transgression linked to the doors could be defined as a *taboo* in the traditional definition of Durkheim:[14]

> On appelle de ce nom un ensemble d'interdictions rituelles qui ont pour objet de prévenir les dangereux effets d'une contagion magique en empêchant tout contact entre une chose ou une catégorie de choses, où est censé résider un principe surnaturel, et d'autres qui n'ont pas ce même caractère ou qui ne l'ont pas au même degré.

Most interesting is the fact that the catechumens, energumens and penitents were, first, inside the church. Pseudo-Dionysius considers the passing through the doors by the catechumens, energumens and penitents a transgression, but, what if they did not leave but remained where they were, ignoring the order of the deacons?

By leaving the church, the catechumens are thrown back into pre-birth life. Thus, the gates are implicitly compared with the genitals of a pregnant woman that gives birth prematurely to her child. Hence the taboo about the doors becomes readily comprehensible. It hints at what may have been a feeling of birth or rebirth when the Christians passed through the external doors.

The Transformation of the Faithful

Paradoxically, it is the exit of the catechumens, energumens and penitents that symbolizes, for the remaining faithful, the entrance into a new world. It is a negative entrance, as if the dismissal of a part of a group was necessary to transform the rest into a new society, a perfect society. It gives a sense of awe ('what if I had to be thrown outside the church like the catechumens?')

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11 Van Gennep (1909) 75: 'D'où la ressemblance de détail entre certains rites de la naissance et certains rites de funérailles', and the ritual of door at Blida, pp. 86–87.

12 Turner (1969) 95.

13 Van Gennep (1909) 14: 'Je crois légitime de distinguer une catégorie spéciale de *Rites de Passage*, lesquels se décomposent en *Rites de séparation, Rites de marge* et *Rites d'agrégation*.' The last two are called *liminality* and *communitas* by Turner (1969) 95–96. See also the General Introduction to this volume.

14 Durkheim (1969) 72.

and sanctification ('I am better than catechumens and I must act so') to the remaining faithful. In contrast to the catechumens-foetuses, the faithful are born or reborn. But to which life? They now become the middle group in the triadic structure of Pseudo-Dionysius, between the clergy and the unworthy people. The pattern used by Pseudo-Dionysius fits the 'pagan' conception[15] of sacred space divided into two parts: a *profane* outside (*propylaia*) and a *sacred* inside (*adyta*) or *temple* (*naos*).[16]

Passing from the description to the philosophy of the rites, Pseudo-Dionysius writes (*EC* 3.2):

> Ταῦτα μὲν οὖν ὡς ἔφην ἐπὶ τὰ τῶν ἀδύτων προπύλαια καλῶς διαγεγραμμένα τοῖς ἀτελέσιν ἔτι πρὸς θεωρίαν αὐτάρκη καταλιπόντες εἰσέλθωμεν ἀπὸ τῶν αἰτιατῶν εἰς τὰ αἴτια (…)
>
> But let us leave behind as adequate for those imperfect regarding the contemplation of these signs which, as I have said, are splendidly depicted on the entrances to the inner sanctuary. We, however, must move from the effects to causes (…)[17]

Those who are 'incomplete', 'imperfect' (*atelesi*) are ordinary Christians without any philosophical background, and quite the same word is used to describe the untimely born foetuses, 'immature' or *atelesta*. The doors of the church, referred to as *pylai*,[18] are here the *propylaia* of the *adyta*. They are beautifully depicted as if the drawings were a kind of substitute to what happens inside the shrine.

In this rhetorical device, the opposition between *propylaia* and *adyta* seems to indicate a pagan background to the Christian explanation of the opposition between catechumens expelled from the Church church, that is *naos* or *adyta*, and the faithful who remain inside. The catechumens are expelled from the *naos* (*EC* 3.7):

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15 See the analysis of Tissi of *adyta* in the Neoplatonic philosophers in this volume (chapter 5).

16 This scheme explains the first movement of the high priest as coming from the *adyta* and the second movement of the catechumens and others as going out into the *propylaia*. Yet, at the beginning, there was a third space, in-between, in which the faithful stand. It received no proper name but only a vague phrase: 'sacred precincts' (*hiera periokhē*).

17 Heil and Ritter (1991) 82, 5–7.

18 Pseudo-Dionysius mentions deacons (called *leitourgoi*) standing at the closed gates (*pylai*) of the Church and processing towards the altar with the holy gifts. See Heil and Ritter (1991) 80, 16–17.

> Ἐπεὶ δὲ τοῦ θείου γεγόνασιν ἔξω ναοῦ καὶ τῆς ὑπερκειμένης αὐτοὺς ἱερουργίας οἱ τῶν τελετῶν ἀμύητοι καὶ ἀτέλεστοι (…)
>
> First to be barred from the nave and from those rites which are beyond them are those who are uninitiated and incomplete regarding the sacraments.[19]

The faithful thereby become the *naos* (*EC* 3.7):

> ναὸς δὲ ἅμα καὶ ὀπαδὸς ἐν τῇ κατ' αὐτὸν ἀκροτάτῃ θεώσει τοῦ θεαρχικοῦ πνεύματος ἔσται τῷ ὁμοίῳ τὸ ὅμοιον ἐνιδρύων.
>
> [the faithful] will have arrived at the highest possible measure of divinization and will be both the temple and the companion of the Spirit of the Deity, like him of whom he has become an image.[20]

Of course, this is a quotation from the first letter of Paul to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 3.16): 'Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple?'. But in this actual context, the faithful become the space in which they are, that is to say a 'temple' (*naos*) or 'inner sanctuary' (*adyta*).

So by now it is clear that as the entrance by the high priest from the altar signifies the sanctification of the Christian people: the expulsion of the unworthy from the gates of the temple transforms those remaining inside into a temple. This is their new birth. They are now worthy of the rest of the liturgy, in contrast to the catechumens. The scenography of the doors is then to be understood as a phenomenon of transformation, that is incorporation or *edification* of the faithful.

The Two Entrances in Maximus the Confessor

The liturgical commentary of Maximus the Confessor written around 626 later received the title *Mystagogia*. It may be related to a (Palestinian?) stational liturgy, as is shown by the entrance of the clergy and laymen from outside the church. People are gathered outside the church and they enter together, which is typical of stational liturgy, in which the people go from one church to another.

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19 Heil and Ritter (1991) 87, 12–13.

20 Heil and Ritter (1991) 86, 10–12.

This work is divided in two parts. In the first part (chapter 1–7), the author explains the church as a kind of Neoplatonic active space:[21] the church symbolically encloses within itself the whole world. In the third chapter, the Church is a figure and an image of the whole world. As such, the two parts of the church are now called *naos* (i.e. 'nave')[22] for the laymen and *hierateion* (that is 'sanctuary for the priests' or 'presbytery'). They are thought to be a figure and image of Earth and Heaven (chapter 3):

> καὶ αὖθις μόνου τοῦ αἰσθητοῦ κόσμου καθ᾽ἑαυτὸν τὴν ἁγίαν τοῦ θεοῦ ἐκκλησίαν εἶναι σύμβολον ἔφασκεν, ὡς οὐρανὸν μὲν τὸ θεῖον ἱερατεῖον ἔχουσαν, γῆν δὲ τὴν εὐπρέπειαν τοῦ ναοῦ κεκτημένην.
>
> Moreover [the blessed old man] used to say that God's holy Church in itself is the symbol of the sensible world as such, since it possesses the divine sanctuary as Heaven and the beauty of the nave as Earth.[23]

In the second part (chapter 8–24), the book describes the liturgy of the Eucharist. It focusses on the two entrances: the first, later to be called the 'Little Entrance', and the second which will become the 'Great Entrance'. How do these two entrances work in this commentary?

The Double First Entrance

The first entrance has a double aspect. First (chapter 8), the high priest enters the *naos* or 'nave' from outside the church, in contrast to Pseudo-Dionysus. This is a symbol of the first coming of Christ on Earth:

> Τὴν μὲν οὖν πρώτην εἰς τὴν ἁγίαν ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ ἀρχιερέως κατὰ τὴν ἱερὰν σύναξιν εἴσοδον τῆς πρώτης τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν Χριστοῦ διὰ σαρκὸς εἰς τὸν κόσμον τοῦτον παρουσίας τύπον καὶ εἰκόνα φέρειν ἐδίδασκε.
>
> [The blessed old man] used to teach that the first entrance of the high priest in the holy church during the sacred Mass bears the figure and the image of the first visit in our world through the flesh of Christ our Salvator, the Son of God.[24]

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21 Mueller-Jourdan (2005) 75–81.

22 Contrary to Pseudo-Dionysius where *naos* seems to be an equivalent of *adyta*, as I have said above.

23 Boudignon (2011) 17–18, ll. 258–260. I use the translation of Berthold (1985).

24 Boudignon (2011) 37, 604–607.

Then, entering the *hierateion*, the 'sanctuary' or 'presbytery', the high priest symbolizes of Christ's ascension into Heaven. This first entrance is then a spatial and temporal experience. The whole Earth is subsumed and hypostasized in the little space of the church: the nave. The laity, seeing the entrance of the bishop, experience the birth of Christ on Earth. I would like to suggest that this first entrance should be seen as an example of the first phase of van Gennep's theory: the separation. For the entrance of the high priest into the nave does not have the same meaning as the entrance of the laity into the nave. Then the symbolism of the church changes, because the nave becomes a symbol of virtue (chapter 9), and entering the nave thus means departing from vicious habits. What the text does not say is that such a sense of leaving behind might have been evoked by the magnificence of the church, with its architectural dimension, its paintings or mosaics, its light and so on …

The two values of the nave of the church might seem surprising:[25]

– 'Earth' for the high priest,
– and 'virtue' for the laity.

They refer to the presentation of the church as a kind of magical box operating through its relation to God, the World or Humanity. In the second chapter of the *Mystagogia*, the nave is presented as Earth, as opposed to Heaven symbolized by the 'sanctuary of the priests'.[26] In the fourth chapter, the Church is said to be figure and image of Man. The body is the image of the nave, whereas the soul stands for the sanctuary. But in a more spiritual way, the practice of virtue, through bodily actions, is symbolized by the nave, and the physical contemplation through the soul is exemplified by the 'sanctuary of the priests'.[27]

It is worth noticing that the first entrance, though common to the bishop and to the laity, does not have the same sense for both, as if they were not passing through the same doors! The entrance of the bishop is a symbolic spectacle for the people (as the descent of Christ to Earth), whereas their own entrance is presented as the experience of an inner moral change (from vice to virtue).

25 Bornert (1966) 108 had already seen this 'double signification' without giving any explanation of it.

26 One question remains unanswered: where was the high priest symbolically before the first entrance?

27 The entrance of the laity is perfectly adapted to the liturgy performed: they are passing from vice (outside) to virtue (inside). Maximus borrows this idea also from Dionysius where the catechumens, possessed, and penitents are thrown outside the church into the 'vice' in which they are supposed to live.

In other words, the entrance through the external doors is to be seen as a birth and a transformation.

The Second Entrance

For Maximus, the second entrance is very different from the first entrance and also from what would become the 'Great Entrance' some centuries later.

There are two kinds of doors: the outer gates of the church, but also the inner doors inside the church, i.e. the sanctuary doors (that is the chancel doors). The second entrance is presented through the dismissal of the catechumens and is then an experience both of an exit and a separation (chapter 15):

> ἡ δὲ μετὰ τὴν ἱερὰν ἀνάγνωσιν τοῦ ἁγίου εὐαγγελίου καὶ τὴν ἐκβολὴν τῶν κατηχουμένων γινομένη κλεῖσις τῶν θυρῶν τῆς ἁγίας τοῦ θεοῦ ἐκκλησίας, τήν τε τῶν ὑλικῶν δηλοῖ πάροδον καὶ τὴν γενησομένην, μετὰ τὸν φοβερὸν ἀφορισμὸν καὶ τὴν φοβερωτέραν ψῆφον, εἰς τὸν νοητὸν κόσμον ἤτοι τὸν νυμφῶνα τοῦ Χριστοῦ τῶν ἀξίων εἴσοδον καὶ τὴν ἐν ταῖς αἰσθήσεσι τῆς κατὰ τὴν ἀπάτην ἐνεργείας τελείαν ἀποβολήν.
>
> The closing of the doors which takes place after the sacred reading of the holy Gospel and the dismissal of the catechumens signifies the passing from material things which will come about after that terrible separation and even more terrible judgment and the entrance of those who are worthy into the spiritual world, that is into the nuptial chamber of Christ, as well as the complete extinction in our senses of deceptive activity.[28]

The separation from the catechumens may be an explanatory device in Maximus' time, the seventh century, because most of society was probably Christian, and one wonders if a category of catechumens still existed.[29] It allows Maximus to give a new sense not only to the nave but also to the whole church building as an intellectual space. Following van Gennep,[30] the doors are used to establish social distinction in a group. Establishing division between catechumens and the rest of people, Maximus cancels the division between laymen and priest. He insists instead that the whole inner space is unified. As

28 Boudignon (2011) 44, 714–720.

29 See note 43 below.

30 Van Gennep (1909) 275–276: 'C'est pourquoi si souvent, passer d'un âge, d'une classe, etc., à d'autres, s'exprime rituellement par le passage sous un portique ou par une 'ouverture des portes'. Il ne s'agit là que rarement d'un 'symbole'; le passage idéal est proprement pour les demi-civilisés un passage matériel.'

such, for Maximus the second entrance is a negative entrance, just as the exit of the catechumens from the church. The idea of Maximus is that with that exit, the laymen rise to a new condition, equivalent to that of the priests.

I said that the second entrance is a negative one. It is a theatrical device. I would like to compare this experience to what happens when we are sitting in a train and on seeing another train departing, we sense that our own train is going in the opposite direction. Similarly, the dismissal of the catechumens gives the impression of entering into a new space, without any real movement of the Christian people. It appears to be a kind of illusion: the scenery changes, but the audience remains without moving.

This negative event gives way to a positive event: the entrance of the holy gifts. The ceremony is said by Maximus to be 'the beginning of the revelation of the mystery of our salvation that is divinely kept secret in the *adyta*' (chapter 16):

> ἡ δὲ τῶν ἁγίων καὶ σεπτῶν μυστηρίων εἴσοδος ἀρχὴ καὶ προοίμιόν ἐστιν ὡς ὁ μέγας ἐκεῖνος ἔφασκε γέρων τῆς γενησομένης ἐν οὐρανοῖς καινῆς διδασκαλίας περὶ τῆς οἰκονομίας τοῦ θεοῦ τῆς εἰς ἡμᾶς, καὶ ἀποκάλυψις τοῦ ἐν ἀδύτοις τῆς θείας κρυφιότητος ὄντος μυστηρίου τῆς ἡμῶν σωτηρίας.
>
> The entrance of the holy and venerable gifts is the beginning and the prelude, as used to say that great old man, of the future new teaching that will take place in Heaven about the plan of salvation of God that concerns us and the revelation of the mystery of our salvation that is divinely kept secret in the *adyta.*[31]

Maximus introduces a third term, i.e. *adyta*, beside 'nave' and 'presbytery'. It is a fictitious space. These *adyta* are not present because they are an anticipation of the end of the world, a kind of fourth dimension … Maximus also calls this new space *nymphōn*, that is 'bridal chamber'. The term probably refers to the ritual of wedding where the bridal chamber is a separate space for the bride and the groom, apart from all the family. The closing of the church doors is seen as the beginning of a symbolic marriage between the faithful and God. In this ritual, either the group as a whole, as Church, is said to be the bride in this symbolic union with God, or each faithful as an individual soul marrying God. In both cases, the distinction between laymen and clergy has been cancelled.

So it is possible to see a progression from birth in the first entrance to wedding in the second entrance. These two moments can be related to the last two

31 Boudignon (2011) 45, 721–725.

phases of van Gennep's *rites de passage: rites de marge* and *rites d'agrégation*,[32] also referred to by Turner (1969) 94–97 as *liminality* and *communitas*. Paradoxically, through the dismissal of catechumens, the *communitas* receives its unity expressed in words of union, marriage and wedding.

Thus for Maximus, I would conclude that the symbolism of the passages through the doors is very different from Pseudo-Dionysius: in Maximus, the high priest comes from outside, he is one of the Christian people, and what happens is a kind of separation of the Christian people and the bishop (through the passage of the outer gates and the chancel barriers) and reunion of both through the dismissal of the catechumens, the closing of the doors, the entrance of the holy gifts from inside the church … The closing of the doors is experienced from the inside (unlike in Dionysius through a sense of awe and birth linked to the expulsion of the unworthy people), and through a new sense of communion and wedding.

The Entrances in Germanus I Patriarch of Constantinople

Germanus I (if he is the real author of the text), probably when he was patriarch of Constantinople between 715 and 730, wrote a commentary on the liturgy, called *Historia mystagōgikē* or *Historia mystica*. The textual tradition has a complex history and the Latin translation of Anastasius the Librarian from around 869–870[33] gives us the oldest layer of the text.[34] The *Historia mystica* may be divided in three parts: first, a commentary on the structural elements inside the church (chapter 1–12); secondly a description of liturgical garments and tools (chapter 13–31); thirdly an explanation of liturgy after the 'Little Entrance' or 'entrance of the Gospel' (chapter 32–63).

The 'Little Entrance'

The commentary speaks of 'the entrance of the Gospel' (chapter 33 and 44),[35] what would later become the 'Little Entrance'. It is not clear whether the high

32 Van Gennep (1909) 14.

33 This Latin text is edited by Petridès (1905).

34 See Bornert (1966) 125–142. I plan, together with Francesca P. Barone, Anne Petrucci and Pascal Boulhol, to make a new critical edition of the text. It will challenge the *stemma codicum* proposed by Bornert. In this paper, I will quote the text of Germanus according to the 'provisional' edition of Brightman (1908) and the Latin version edited by Petridès (1905). The translation is drawn (and sometimes adapted) from Meyendorff (1984).

35 Ch. 33 and 44 bear the Latin titles *de ingressu evangelii*. See Petridès (1905) 299 and 300.

priest enters the church together with the entrance of the Gospel or not. Traditionally, it is thought that the patriarch entered as part of this procession.[36] There is no mention of the outer door of the Church in the first part of the commentary but only of the 'chancel barrier' or *cancella* (chapter 8):

> Κάγκελλά εἰσι τὸν τῆς προσευχῆς τόπον δηλοῦντα ἐν ᾧ σημαίνει τὴν μὲν ἔξωθεν τοῦ λαοῦ εἴσοδον, τὴν δὲ ἔσωθεν τὰ ἅγια τῶν ἁγίων ὑπάρχουσαν καὶ μόνοις τοῖς ἱερεῦσιν οὖσαν εὐεπίβατον
>
> *Cancelli sunt, qui orationis locum denuntiant, in quo significant extrinsecus quidem populi ingressum, extrinsecus autem sancta sanctorum existentia et solis sacerdotibus accessibilia.*
>
> The chancel barriers indicate the place of prayer, the outside being for the people, and the inside, the Holy of Holies, being accessible only to the priests.[37]

The text is rather strange, and puzzled Paul Meyendorff who did not translate the word 'entrance' (εἴσοδον): Germanus says that the chancel barriers are symbol of two spaces defined not as space but, in a quite astonishing manner, as entrances (εἴσοδον), and access (εὐεπίβατον 'easily accessible'). Outside the chancel, one enters the space of the people or laymen; inside, one enters the Holy of Holies, the space of the priests. I think it is worth noticing that the two separate spaces are defined as 'entrance' as if a space would psychologically have no existence except through entrance.

Following the ideas of Maximus' *Mystagogia* but in another moment of the liturgy, Germanus writes (chapter 33) that 'the entrance of the Gospel means the visit and entrance of the Son of God into the world'. He elaborates upon all the symbols of Christmas:

> Ἡ εἴσοδος τοῦ εὐαγγελίου ἐμφαίνει τὴν παρουσίαν καὶ τὴν εἴσοδον τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ τὴν εἰς τὸν κόσμον.
>
> *Introitus uero euangelii significat praesentiam et ingressum filii Dei in mundum.*

36 Taft (1980–1981) 49–51; Meyendorff (1984) 19.

37 Brightman (1908) 259; Petridès (1905) 311.

> The entrance of the Gospel signifies the coming of the Son of God and his entrance into [the] world.[38]

Here, as in chapter 43, Germanus transfers the symbol of Christ coming into the world from the entrance of the high priest (in Maximus) to the entrance of the book of the Gospel:

> Τὸ ἅγιον εὐαγγέλιόν ἐστιν ἡ παρουσία τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ καθ᾽ ἣν ὡράθη ἡμῖν
>
> *Sanctum euangelium est praesentia filii Dei secundum quam uisus est nobis.*
>
> The Gospel is the coming of the son of God when he was seen by us.[39]

There is a kind of reification: the spectacle is no longer the entrance of a person but of an object. Sanctity is no longer conveyed by the high priest but by what we would call in theatrical language a 'prop'. This change may be caused by iconodulic thought. A detail may make this thought easier to understand: the interior of the censer is compared to the womb of the Virgin (chapter 42):

> ἢ πάλιν ἡ γαστὴρ τοῦ θυμιατηρίου νοηθείη ἂν ἡ ἡγιασμένη μήτρα τῆς ἁγίας παρθένου καὶ θεοτόκου φοροῦσα τὸν θεῖον ἄνθρακα Χριστόν …
>
> *Vel rursus uentriculis turibuli intelligendus est uterus uirginis, qui diuinum portauit carbonem, uidelicet Christum …*
>
> Again the interior of the censer is understood as the sanctified womb of the holy Virgin and Theotokos who bore the divine coal, Christ …[40]

The entrance is not of a man (the high priest) but of an object that expresses, one more time, the idea of birth. In this interpretation, the faithful are called to a form of pilgrimage to Bethlehem, in order, not to experience their own birth with awe, but to see that of Christ, through an *iconic* artefact, that is through the book of the Gospel or the censer. The explanation of the Trisagion hymn stresses the same idea, because the faithful are supposed to be 'like the magi' and 'bring gifts to Christ' (chapter 34).

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38 Brightman (1908) 265; Petridès (1905) 353.

39 Brightman (1908) 388; Petridès (1905) 356.

40 Brightman (1908) 388; Petridès (1905) 355.

The 'Great Entrance'

The 'Great Entrance' begins with the dismissal of catechumens (chapter 46), briefly evocated with a passage from the Gospel of John (10.16):

> Οἱ κατηχούμενοι ἐξέρχονται ὡς ἀμύητοι τοῦ θείου βαπτίσματος καὶ τῶν τοῦ Χριστοῦ μυστηρίων· περὶ ὧν λέγει ὁ κύριος ὅτι Καὶ ἄλλα πρόβατα ἔχω κἀκεῖνά με δεῖ ἀγαγεῖν καὶ τῆς φωνῆς μου ἀκούσουσιν [καὶ γενήσονται μία ποίμνη, εἷς ποιμήν].
>
> *Catechumeni exeunt tanquam diuino minus imbuti baptismate Christique mysteriis, de quibus dominus dicit, quia 'et alias oues habeo et illas oportet me adducere et uocem meam audient et fiet unum ouile et unus pastor'.*
>
> The catechumens leave because they have not been initiated by baptism into the mysteries of Christ; about the catechumens the Lord says: 'I have also other sheep. I must bring them also, and they will heed my voice. [So there will be one flock, one shepherd].'[41]

I have previously insisted on the paradoxical sense of *communitas* expressed through the dismissal of catechumens in Maximus. Here, the dismissal is really problematic. The catechumens are said to be part of the flock: then why are they said to be expelled? The dismissal is fictitious,[42] it is only a relic of the former Pseudo-Dionysian system, as recently shown by Taft.[43] This evolution of the liturgy may also be explained by what I would call the problem of the *horror of the exit*: I mean the difficulty of having a group expelled from the church, as if it were too great a sacrifice for the unity of the Christian people. The real dismissal which was an important part of a 'rite de passage' is now

41 Brightman (1908) 389; Petridès (1905) 357.

42 Bornert (1966) 162.

43 Taft (2006) 29 n. 13: 'We have no history of catechumenate in Constantinople. Canons 78, 95, 97 of the Council in Trullo (691/692) are the last documents in which catechumens appear in Byzantine synodal legislation (…), though later canonical collections continued to include earlier legislation long after it had fallen in disuse. (…). [A] *Scholia in librum de ecclesiastica hierarchia* [*Ps.-Dionysii*] calls the dismissal of the catechumens a dead letter (οὐ γίνεται: PG 4:141C) (…). Furthermore, neither Prokopios nor Paul Silentiarios ever mention catechumens in Hagia Sophia (…), though they go on and on about the catechumenate. Continual reference to the catechumenate in Byzantine liturgical texts proves nothing. Liturgies continue to go through the motions of a ritual long after it has lost any relevance to reality. (…) Byzantine sources from the sixth-tenth centuries show that baptism on the fortieth day after birth had long been normal …'.

substituted by a procession performed by professionals (i.e. by deacons), bearing what could be called iconic artefacts: holy gifts, the fans with images of the Seraphim, etc. Van Gennep would have called this iconic procession 'une exhibition de *sacra.*'[44] The stress is indeed put on the entrance of the holy gifts that have been prepared in a separate place, the *skeuophylakion*, slightly distant from the church (chapter 48). The holy gifts now enter the church from outside[45] through the doors of the church. It is worth noticing that an exit, i.e. the negative entrance of the dismissal of the catechumens has been substituted with a positive entrance, namely the procession of the holy gifts. It is a spectacle for the laity. Let us quote Meyendorff[46] and his description of the 'Great Entrance'[47] in Germanus' liturgy:

> Visually the Great Entrance was the most dramatic in the liturgy. A pair of deacons led the procession with candles and incense. Next came a deacon with the *flabellum*, or fan, followed by deacons carrying the veils used to cover the chalices and patens. Then came the gifts themselves (the bread and wine to be consecrated) contained in the chalices and patens, and finally the aer, which was used to cover all the gifts.

This entrance is emphasized by the Cherubic hymn. The chant reads as follows:

> We who mystically represent the Cherubim and sing the thriceholy hymn to the life-giving Trinity, let us lay aside all wordly care to receive the King of All escorted unseen by the angelic corps! Alleluia![48]

This last hymn means, according to Germanus, the 'entrance of all the saints and righteous' 'with the Cherubic powers' (chapter 49):

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44 Van Gennep (1909) 127: 'L'exhibition des *sacra*, à Eleusis comme en Australie (*churinga*, rhombe sacré) ou en Amérique (masques, épis sacrés, *katcinas*, etc.) est le rite culminant, mais ne constitue pas à lui seul les 'mystères'.' I want here to thank Dionigi Albera whose advices in anthropological matters have been very precise and precious. He suggested to me that the *iconic* procession could be related to the new trend of anthropological studies on religion, the 'material religion'. The editors (Meyer et al. (2010) 208) of *Material Religion: The Journal of Objects, Art and Belief* suggest that 'scholars need to be asking how religion happens materially.'

45 In Maximus, the doors were closed after the dismissal of the catechumens, a sign that the holy gifts could not be brought in from outside.

46 Meyendorff (1984) 20–21.

47 See also Taft (1980–1981) 53–54.

48 Taft (1992) 47.

> Ὁ χερουβικὸς ὕμνος ἐμφαίνει διὰ τῆς τῶν διακόνων προοδοποιήσεως καὶ τῆς τῶν ῥιπιδίων σεραφικῶν ἀπεικονισμάτων ἱστορίας, τὴν εἴσοδον τῶν ἁγίων καὶ δικαίων ἁπάντων συνεισερχομένων μετὰ τοῦ ἁγίου τῶν ἁγίων ὑπάρχοντος, συνεισπορευομένων καὶ προπορευομένων ἔμπροσθεν τῶν χερουβικῶν δυνάμεων καὶ ἀγγελικῶν στρατιῶν…
>
> *Cherubim hymnus indicat per diaconorum praecedentium uiamque facentium flabellorumque seraphicarum imaginationum contemplationem introitum sanctorum et iustorum omnium qui intraturi et mansuri sunt cum sancto sanctorum, pariter incedentibus et ante cherubicas uirtutes etiam angelicis militiis …*
>
> By means of the procession of the deacons and the representation of the fans, which are in the likeness of the seraphim, the Cherubic Hymn signifies the entrance of all the saints and righteous with what is the Holy of Holies, as also the angelic hosts enter together with and ahead of the Cherubic powers.[49]

Here a kind of reification took place. There is again a movement of people (the deacons), but the most important is now the entrance of the Seraphim symbolized by the Seraphic images painted or embroidered on the *flabella*, or fans. Here the iconodulic vision triumphs because a kind of icons enter into the procession. The entrance of deacons is not exactly on the same level as the entrance of liturgical artefacts: the fans are icons of the seraphic powers, whereas the deacons symbolize the angels. Since Seraphim are placed above the simple angels, the icons on the fans are more important than the deacons.

Whereas the entrance of the holy gifts in Maximus symbolized the entrance into a new world for the faithful, here in Germanus, the laity remains outside that spectacle. Germanus writes a second explanation about this entrance (chapter 50): Ἔστι δὲ καὶ κατὰ μίμησιν τοῦ ἐνταφιασμοῦ τοῦ Χριστοῦ … *Est autem et secundum imitationem sepulturae Christi* … 'It is also in imitation of the burial of Christ'. The meaning of this second entrance changes because it is now compared to the burial of Christ. The entrance movement of people is less significant in this second explanation than the objects themselves. The second entrance is once more a sort of spiritual pilgrimage to the Holy Sepulchre and 'death mysticism':[50] all the artefacts in the procession of the holy gifts

49 Brightman (1908) 390; Petridès (1905) 358. I have modified the translation of Meyendorff, according to the Latin version.

50 Winkler (1995) 81 n. 66 deals with the motif of burial *cortège* and the reinterpretation of liturgy according to what he calls a 'death mysticism' in the East in the late fourth century.

(chapter 51–54) are associated with elements of the death of Christ. The cover on the paten is associated with the cloth on Christ's head (chapter 51); the paten, with the hands of Joseph and Nicodemus burying Christ (chapter 52); the chalice, with the vessel receiving the holy blood at the Cross (chapter 53); and the veil or *aër*, with the stone closing the entrance of Christ's tomb (chapter 54).

Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to study the different senses of the entrances in the first three Greek liturgical commentaries. Most important in Pseudo-Dionysius' commentary is what happens in the space for the priests called 'altar' from where the sanctity is given to the faithful. The descent of the high priest at the beginning of the Mass and his return to the altar make the faithful sense they are on the threshold of the sacred. It appears that the second most important 'entrance' is for Pseudo-Dionysius the dismissal of the catechumens. Since the catechumens are expelled towards the *propylaia*, this *liminality* makes clear, in a negative way, the sense of religious fear, of taboo, attached to the passage through the outer doors. Catechumens are seen as foetuses and the doors symbolize birth.

Maximus offers a different commentary with two entrances from outside the church. The first is the entrance of the high priest and of the laymen from outside to inside the church. It is the only commentary to deal explicitly with an entrance from outside to inside. The first entrance is the symbol of the birth of Christ and it expresses for the laymen the passage from vice to virtue. In some way, according to Van Gennep's theory, the passage through the doors expresses a change of state (birth, virtue) and a separation of the high priest from the laity.

Maximus' commentary on the second entrance develops a Pseudo-Dionysian thought: the expulsion of the catechumens creates a new space and a new community, symbolized by the closure of the doors; thus, the barrier between laity and clergy is lifted. Moreover, the inner space of the church becomes a 'bridal chamber': so, according to modern anthropological analysis, the two entrances appear as a progression from birth to marriage, from *liminality* to *communitas*, to put it in Turner's words.

In Germanus' commentary, the 'first entrance' is associated with various liturgical artefacts like the Gospel and the censer, representing metaphorically, through *iconic* items, the birth of Christ.

For the 'second entrance', the procession of the holy gifts existed already in Pseudo-Dionysius' and Maximus' commentary, but Germanus focusses on it.

This entrance receives a new significance: it is reified in the objects (carried by the deacons) which are symbols of the death and burial of Christ.

Both entrances are a kind of invitation to a pilgrimage in the holy Land, to Bethlehem and Jerusalem, to the cradle and to the Sepulchre of Christ: a kind of *imitatio Christi* from birth to death. It is also as if in these entrances Germanus were putting less and less emphasis on what I would call a *plain* theatre (a theatre of entrances and exits of *characters*) to stress more and more what I would like to call a *shadow play*, a theatre of liturgical artefacts where the 'props' are more important than the actors.

The links between these three commentaries are evident. To answer the question of the introduction: yes, doors always convey the idea of birth, through a possible transgressive passage through them by catechumens in Pseudo-Dionysius, or through the idea of the birth of Christ in the first entrance in Maximus and in Germanus. However, this metaphor stirs different feelings: taboo and awe in Pseudo-Dionysius, transformation and separation in Maximus, iconic spectacle and symbolic pilgrimage to Bethlehem in Germanus.

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CHAPTER 4

Bonus Intra, Melior Exi!

'Inside' and 'Outside' at Greek Incubation Sanctuaries

Ildikó Csepregi

Bonus intra, melior exi was the inscription at the entrance of the temple of Asclepius in the African town of Lambaesis.[1] 'Entering as a good man' into the sacred space refers to the ritual purity and piety required when setting foot into any holy place. 'Leaving as a better one' condenses the religious experience characteristic of incubation shrines, where bodily and spiritual healing often provided worshippers with a life-changing experience. In this chapter, I would like to grasp this double-sided, at once physical and spiritual, aspect of incubation practice both in the Classical Greek and early Christian contexts. I will examine the door and other concepts closely associated with it, like gate, entryway or threshold, as well as notions of approaching, entering, leaving or staying inside or outside a sacred building, using these semantic fields to highlight certain important elements of the pagan and early Christian incubation experience. Disparities in the survival of material and textual remains lead to unavoidable differences in the sources (both in their nature and the evidence they give). While for Classical and Hellenistic Greek sanctuaries like those of Asclepius at Epidaurus and Pergamum we can rely on richly-documented archaeological, epigraphic and literary sources,[2] for the early Byzantine period our chief testimonies come from hagiography, the miracle accounts that formed around saints, backed up occasionally by a little evidence from iconography and other cult-related artefacts. There is, nevertheless, an underlying unity in the practice and in the religious experience of incubation. Without overstressing the continuity of the ritual itself, its essentially similar characteristics and cultic context render such comparison worthwhile.

1 In today's Algeria, from ca 209–11 CE, CIL VIII. 1, nr. 2584 = T 319, all the T references in this paper refer to the collection of testimonies of Edelstein and Edelstein (1998²).

2 From the vast literature I would only highlight the primary sources I relied on in this chapter: Kavvadias (1891–1918), LiDonnici (1989), Edelstein and Edelstein (1998²), Girone (1998), Melfi (2007).

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Temple sleep or incubation[3] was a religious practice in which the worshipper voluntarily went to a sacred site (a cave, a tomb, a temple, or—in a Christian context—a place with relics) with the intention of sleeping there. Sleeping in a space specifically designated for the incubation ritual often required special circumstances: prior performance of certain rites (for example purification or abstinence) or wearing specific clothing. During their dream-encounter with the divine inhabitant of a holy place, pilgrims sought either a cure or an oracle. This being could be a deity, an animal-epiphany, a lesser-grade divinity, a hero, a nymph, a living holy man, or a martyr honoured after death. The healer miraculously cured his patient in the dream, either through an immediate intervention or by giving a miraculous prescription.

From ancient Mesopotamia through Greece and Rome, as well as in pre-Christian Gaul, incubation was a popular ritual. It found its way into Judaism, Christianity and Islam. In parts of the Mediterranean world, especially rural areas, Catholic, Orthodox, or Muslim, it has survived to the present day. I do not intend to suggest that we are dealing with continuity of ritual, since the theological framework of each cult differs greatly from the others, yet the practice itself was ubiquitous. Where continuity in some cases can be seen and where comparison of different and similar phenomena clearly makes clearly sense, is at the interface between Greek and Christian practice. By Hellenistic times, incubation had developed into a widespread practice all over the Eastern Mediterranean, embracing non-Greek cults as well and establishing the ritual of temple sleep in Egypt, Asia Minor and beyond. When Christianity was emerging as an organized Church, it had to face the challenge presented by the overwhelming popularity of these pagan cults. To counter the influence of the Divine Physician, Asclepius, who, for many other reasons was held to be one of the strongest enemies of Christ,[4] the Church sometimes allowed, tolerated, and occasionally even fostered the Christianization of existing incubation practice. Instead of temples, the sick suppliants went to sleep in the shrines where the relics of saints and martyrs were held, and later to churches housing famous icons or statues. Closest to the old Greek pagan practice, in early Byzantium we find the cults of incubation saints like Saints Cosmas and

3 For a thorough introduction of the practice, both pagan and Christian, see Deubner (1900), Hamilton (1906); for the most recent overview on the pagan material: Ehrenheim (2015) and Renberg (2017), which I have not been able to consult for this article), and on the Christian material: my own forthcoming book on Christian incubation hagiography.

4 On this contrast, see Rüttimann (1986) and Dal Covolo and Sfameni Gasparro (Rome 2008).

Damian,[5] Cyrus and John,[6] or Artemius,[7] all most prominent in the seventh century (preceded by Saint Thecla whose fifth-century Life and Miracles also attest to her incubation cult[8]); in addition there were several other healer saints who did not operate chiefly as incubation saints but whose cult included the practice.[9]

One of the reasons for incubation's persistence and popularity was that in every period and geographical zone it catered to an elementary demand for healing through communication with the divine, and yet required so little: a sacred place and an individual who went there intending to sleep.[10]

In what follows I shall analyse some characteristic spatial elements of the incubation experience, focussing on examples of classical and late antique Greek, and early Byzantine incubation sanctuaries. It will be seen that it was no simple matter to enter or not to enter a sanctuary, and especially the somewhat secluded incubation. I would like to illustrate how the importance of sanctuary space, both inside and outside, contributed significantly to the essence of the temple sleep ritual.

The Way to the Temple of Asclepius: Open Doors

One of the richest and best preserved collections of source material on temple sleep comes from Epidaurus, a city that hosted one of the most celebrated sanctuaries in Classical Antiquity. The archaeological remains, combined with the texts that record the miraculous cures, present us with a many-faceted, detailed description of the ritual.[11]

At Epidaurus the sacred grove was open from all sides and anyone could wander freely in it, reading the votive tablets, admiring the artworks, watching the games or visiting the library. The temple of Asclepius was always open, day and night, which was quite an unusual practice in Antiquity.[12] One testimony

5 Deubner (1907), Festugière (1971), their miracles are abbreviated in this paper as KDM.

6 Gascou (2006), Herzog (1939), Montserrat (1998), Sansterre (1991). Their miracles are abbreviated as MCJ.

7 Nesbitt and Crisafulli (1997), his miracles abbreviated in this paper as MA.

8 Dagron (1987), and Talbot and Johnson (2012).

9 Delehaye (1925), Grossmann (2007).

10 For a clear general overview, see Pedley (2005).

11 LiDonnici (1989) and LiDonnici (1995), Tomlinson (1983), cf. also Melfi (2007).

12 See the more nuanced view of Corbett, who argues that it is not true in general that Greek temples opened their doors only at festivals (but also cites example which did just this): Corbett (1970).

of the ease with which a temple of Asclepius could be visited and entered comes from a description of the third century BCE in which Herondas pictures two ladies walking, chatting and admiring the artworks in an Asclepieion.[13] (On the basis of this description both Corbett[14] and Williamson[15]—quite rightly—underline the ease of access to the temple space. I would add that this was due to the fact that the temple itself was an Asclepieion and an incubation sanctuary). In contrast to the majority of temples and sanctuaries where cultic acts were confined to certain periods scheduled over the year,[16] the Asclepieia were open to the ritual continuously and they kept—in addition to the festive ceremonies—daily services to glorify Asclepius.[17]

Openness was also a characteristic feature of the god himself. Unlike some Greek deities and cult sites, anybody could consult Asclepius: the ritual was not restricted to any community, language or ethnic identity,[18] or indeed by the number of times the god could be consulted.[19] Strabo gives an account of a healing cave, where incubation was practiced but most often the priests could sleep on the behalf of the patients, and adds that to all other people entry was 'forbidden and deadly'.[20]

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13 Herondas (ca 250 BCE), *Mim.* 4.1–95 (= T 482).

14 Corbett (1970) 150.

15 In her contribution (chapter 11) in this volume.

16 For an overview of such restrictions and entrance taboos, see Dillon (1997) 152–153.

17 For the daily services in different Asclepieia, see the testimonies T 553 (second century BCE), T 482 speaks of the morning hours, whereas T 485 mentions the evening services.

18 Unlike in some cults, where such prohibitions existed. e.g Plutarch, *Quaest. Rom.* 16 attests that neither slaves nor Aetiolians, men or women, were to enter the shrine of Leucothea in Chaeroneia. Herodotus (*Hist.* 5.72) tells how Cleomenes was banned from entering the temple of the goddess on the Athenian Acropolis, with the priestess barring the entry saying that no Dorian should enter.

19 As, for example, initially at Delphi, where a person could turn to the oracle once a year and only on designated days.

20 'On the road between the Tralleians and Nysa is a village of the Nysaeans, not far from the city Acharaca, where is the Plutonium, with a costly sacred precinct and a shrine of Pluto and Core, and also the Charonium, a cave that lies above the sacred precinct, by nature wonderful; for they say that those who are diseased and give heed to the cures prescribed by these gods resort thither and live in the village near the cave among experienced priests, who on their behalf sleep in the cave and through dreams prescribe the cures. These are also the men who invoke the healing power of the gods. And they often bring the sick into the cave and leave them there, to remain in quiet, like animals in their lurking-holes, without food for many days. And sometimes the sick give heed also to their own dreams, but still they use those other men, as priests, to initiate them into

The pilgrims who had come to meet Asclepius face to face in a dream and ask for his advice or medical help, arrived at the official entrance to the sanctuary precinct—the Gate or *Propylaia*. Beside the decorative statues, the *propylaia* also housed altars that could have been approached at any time.[21] In Epidaurus the Gate stood at the end of two wide highways, one from Epidaurus, the other from Argos.[22] It was a point of arrival and a symbolic entryway to the sanctuary precinct, which was not enclosed with a *temenos* wall, but only surrounded by boundary stones.

The Italian archaeologist Rita Sassu has written beautifully about the functions and important aspects of Greek sanctuary gates.[23] On the one hand, the gate, the *propylon*, had as its most obvious function that of representing the point of transition where profane space became sacred. Beside its religious and ritual aspects, it was the first thing the pilgrims, as visitors or worshippers, encountered in their exploration of the sacred place. The way it was built not only made this passage-through into a monumental object in itself, but also offered worshippers a place to rest and pause, making them stop, contemplate and fix in the memory the vista it offered over the sanctuary area. On the other hand, being an important building in itself, the gate was a statement of the sanctuary builders' economic wealth and their character as a civic and religious community. The monumental gate represented the sanctuary itself: its ritual significance, its artistic beauty, its wealth, and that of the community that had erected it.

In Epidaurus the monumental *propylaia* were placed asymmetrically between the two walls that flanked the road. There were no interior walls inside the *propylaia*, that is, the gate did not have an actual controlling function to limit entry. Its interior was divided into three aisles, the central one being the widest. Benches against the side walls provided the visitors with the possibility of resting before going on to the sanctuary. This impressive construction was built around the first half of the third century BCE: it was twenty meters wide,

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the mysteries and to counsel them. *To all others the place is forbidden and deadly*', Strabo, *Geogr.* 14.1.44. (transl. Hamilton and Falconer 1903).

21 T 482.

22 Cf. Fougeres' entry 'Propylum, Propylaeum, Propylaea' in Daremberg and Saglio (1873–1919) 686–690. See also the description in Bell Dinsmoor (1973) 286: 'The north entrance to the sanctuary at Epidaurus had hexastyle porticoes on fronts, Ionics on the outer and Corinthian in the inner, while, this being an unwalled sanctuary, there were no doors whatever. The Ionic or outer front has a frieze sculptured with alternating bucrania and rosettes, while the inner front was obviously imitated from the internal treatment of the tholos at Epidaurus, with its Corinthian capitals and cyma-profiled frieze.'

23 Sassu (2012), cf. also Guggisberg (2013).

with six Ionian marble columns outside and six Corinthian columns on the inside. Its lion-head decoration echoed that of the temple of Asclepius and the *tholos*. Its importance and function as a border-marker between the outer space and the sacred area within is best captured by the verses inscribed on the architrave:

> Pure must be the one who enters the fragrant temple,
> Purity means nothing but holy thoughts.[24]

Before Entering: Ritual Purification and Other Pre-Requisites

'… and we ourselves fix the boundaries to the sanctuaries and precincts of the gods, so that nobody may cross them unless he be pure; and when we enter we sprinkle ourselves …'. This is how the Hippocratic author described the custom of ritual purification upon entering any sanctuary precinct.[25]

The earliest description of what happened before and during incubation ritual, that of Aristophanes' *Ploutus* from 408 BCE also mentions the purificatory bathing required before entering the Temple of Asclepius (at Pireus).[26]

Records attached to incubation cults offer a more nuanced picture of what other ritual gestures might be required. Epidaurian sources often include formulaic references to people having performed the customary rites, but without many particulars.[27] Ritual purification could mean ablutions like the washing of hands or bathing before entering through the gate, or could refer

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24 ἁγνὸν χρὴ ναοῖο θυώδεος ἐντὸς ἰόντα / ἔμμεναι, ἁγνεία δ'ἐστὶ φρονεῖν ὅσια. The inscription survived in several texts, the earliest of which is Theophrastus' *De pietate* from ca 340 BCE; it is also quoted in Porphyrius, *De abstinentia* 2.19 (= T 318). A new dating, however, has emerged recently, in Bremmer (2002) 106–108, who concludes that the inscription cannot be from Theophrastus' time, and locates it around the year 0. His hypothesis hardly modifies my argument, as my point is that the exhortation to ritual purity is linked to the entrance of the sanctuary. Concepts like purity of heart or purity of mind in connection with the cult of Asclepius can be found in Philostratus, *VA* 1.10.

25 Hipp. *Morb.Sacr.* For an overview on the subject, see Parker (1983).

26 Aristoph. *Pl.* 659–738.

27 The *Iamata* (miracle stories) use general terms ('When he had performed the preliminary sacrifices and fulfilled the usual rites….') T 423; more epigraphic texts referring to these rites: Edelstein and Edelstein (1998[2]); the first-hand experience of these preliminary rites are described by the second century rhetor Aelius Aristides who sojourned at the Asclepius temple at Pergamum for years and wrote a detailed diary, see *Sacred Tales* 2.30–31 in Behr (1981).

to other conditions like fasting, sexual abstinence or avoiding wine.[28] It is important to note that different rules applied to those who came to undergo the incubation ritual, and those who came as visitors, as companions to family members, or those healed patients who returned to bring a thanksgiving offering. The sanctuaries of Asclepius had another unique characteristic: the presence of water was an obligatory requirement for the functioning of the cult and purification rituals.[29]

The most serious state of ritual impurity was the pollution represented by the dying and by women in labour. They were forbidden from entering the entire sanctuary precinct, whereas those who were allowed and wished to undergo the incubation ritual had to comply with a few requirements beforehand. These preliminary rituals varied, and most often concerned the following deeds: 1. ablution, often performed at the gate, 2. sacrifice and / or the promise of a votive or thanksgiving offering, 3. (perhaps not obligatory) feeding Asclepius' sacred animals, especially the snakes, with a honey cake, 4. a component that differed in each site, such as fasting, abstinence from certain activities, food, wine, white clothes, linens, and bringing the skin of the sacrificed animal to sleep on. As long as the worshippers were not ready, they slept elsewhere, still within the precinct but not in the incubation hall, just as their servants and relatives did. We must keep in mind that many people stayed quite a long time in the sanctuary awaiting the cure: weeks, months, and (rarely) even years, and obviously did not undergo the incubation ritual every single night. A detailed description of ritual requirements in the context of incubation has come down to us on an inscription from Pergamum, a city that hosted the most celebrated sanctuary of Asclepius in the imperial period:

> … let him enter into …
> … he will have ten days …
> … entering, after bathing, if …
> … to be set free, let him purify completely …
> … in a white chiton and with brimstone, and with laurel …

28 A very detailed description both about the documented and the only supposed preliminary rites can be found in Ehrenheim (2015) Chapter 1 'Rites and Rules'; for further citations of sources and interpretations, see Deubner (1900) Chapter 2 'De incubationis ritibus symbolisque'.

29 The importance of water was so great that A. Duprez attributed the absence of the Asclepius cult in inland Syria to the lack of water there. Cf. Duprez (1970) 71; On the close associations of occidental pre-Christian healing cults (incl. incubation) with water, see Rousselle (1990).

... with fillets which let him purify completely ...
... let him go toward the god ...
into the great incubation room, in incubant ...
... with pure white sacrificial victims garlanded with olive shoots
... neither seal-ring nor belt nor ...
... barefoot ...[30]

The requirements of purity here concern explicitly those who intended to enter the incubation hall, a secluded space characteristic of all Asclepieia.

The Incubation Hall: The Place Forbidden to Enter

Among the specific places within the cult site of an Asclepius sanctuary is the spot that draws the most attention as the focus of the ritual: the incubation hall.[31] The *abaton* or *enkoimeterion* was the place where the actual incubation happened. Although there is a great variety in the size and location of incubation halls in different sanctuaries, there are some criteria that hold true for all of them. First, it had to be close to the temple. Second, it had to have had a source of water, since incubants not only cleansed themselves upon entering the sacred precinct, but also when entering the incubation room—which was usually the place where the votive tablets and votive objects were displayed. Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, it had to be secluded.[32]

In Epidaurus it was no doubt a separate building near the temple, secured from one side by a wall and by a row of columns from the other. In Roman times it had a two-story extension to its western part, the lower story being enclosed by a wall and doors, and the upper secured by a stone balustrade. Patients who installed themselves between the columns probably made use of some kind of isolating dividers like curtains or wooden panels.[33]

30 T 513 *Inscriptio Pergamena* [=Inschriften von Pergamon, II. nr. 264.] ... εἰσπορευέσθ]ω εἰς ... | ... ἡμέ]ρας δέκ[α] ἀποδέξετ(α)[ι ... | εἰσιὼν λουσάμενος, ἐά[ν ... |... ἀπαλ]λάσσεσθαι περικα-θαιρέ[τω ... | ... χιτῶ]νι λεθκῶι καὶ [θ]είωι καὶ δ[άφνηι ... |... ται]νίας, ἃς περικ[α]θαιρέτω ω ... | ... εἰσ]πορευέσθω πρὸς τὸν θεὸν τ ... | ... εἰς τὸ μ]έγα ἐνκοιμητήριον ὁ ἐγκο[ιμησόμενος ... | ... ἱερε]ίοις λευκοῖς ἀγνοῖς ἐλάας ἔ[ρνεσιν ἐστεμμένοις | ... μήτε δακτ]ύλιον μήτε ζώνην μ[ήτε ... | ... ἀνυπ]ό[δ]ητο[ν ... |.

31 For the difficulties in identifying incubation dormitories and for some examples in prominent Greek Asclepieia, see Ehrenheim (2009). In some cases, as in Pergamum, there were more incubation halls, used by a different clientele.

32 Cf. Ehrenheim (2009) 239, referring also to Armpis (2001).

33 Faraklas (1972) 13–14 and Coulton (1976) 237–238.

The earlier phase of the incubation hall, as attested in fourth century inscriptions, might not have had actual doors, but entrance was forbidden to those who were not incubating and those who had not yet performed the purification rites and the promise of an offering. The name of the building, *abaton*, reflects its character: 'a place it is forbidden to enter'. How seriously this was taken is shown by a miracle story (*iama*) in which a man, curious about what was going on inside but knowing that he should not actually enter, climbed a tree and tried to peep inside from above. Of course he fell, injured his eyes, and came as a suppliant to the god, this time sleeping properly in the incubation hall:

> Aeschines, when the suppliants were already asleep, climbed up a tree and tried to see over into the Abaton. But he fell from the tree on to some fencing and his eyes were injured. In a pitiable state of blindness, he came as a suppliant to the god and slept in the Temple and was healed.[34]

The practice of going to sleep inside a designated temple-space in order to see a dream of Asclepius or one of several other such incubation figures, continued and flourished for centuries. Both in its most prominent locations as well as in its methods, temple sleep was closely linked to contemporary scientific medicine.[35] After the peak of popularity in the Classical period, hand in hand with the development of Hippocratic medicine, the second century CE witnessed another significant boom in the practice of temple sleep. Of this phase Pergamum, already mentioned, became the most emblematic sanctuary, and host to one of the most spectacular Asclepieia. It was also the hometown of Galen. Its fame attracted crowds from all walks of life, from emperors to the most prominent members of the Greek-speaking intelligentsia. Among the latter we find Aelius Aristides, who became an assiduous devotee of Asclepius and a prolific chronicler of the Pergamon sanctuary.[36]

Aristides writes a lot about the temple building itself. Among other details, he tells us about the actual doors of the Asclepieion.[37] He attests to the custom of locking up the temple doors and lighting the sacred candles, and mentions

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34 T 423.11: Αἰσχίνας ἐγκεκοιμισμένων ἤδη τῶν ἱκετῶν ἐπὶ δένδρεόν τι ἀμβὰς ὑπερέκυπτε εἰς τὸ ἄβατον. καταπετὼν οὖν ἀπὸ τοῦ δένδρεος περὶ σκόλοπάς τινας τοὺς ὀπτίλλους ἀμφέπαισε. κακῶς δὲ διακείμενος καὶ τυφλὸς γεγενημένος καθικετεύσας τὸν θεὸν ἐνεκάθευδε καὶ ὑγιὴς ἐγένετο.

35 Cf. Csepregi (2012); several related issues are addressed in Oberhelman (2013).

36 Beside Behr (1968) and Behr (1981), see more recently Petsalis-Diomidis (2010).

37 Ael. Arist. *Or.* 47.11, T 485 and 486.

that the *neokoros* (sacristan) would bring the keys. Elsewhere[38] he speaks about the *tyroros* (doorkeeper) bringing in the candles, and more importantly, he also links the door to purification rituals. The 'holy thoughts', which we might interpret in terms of spiritual preparation or religious feeling, seem rather to have referred to strict observation of those rites. While ritual impurity was the only factor that rendered a person unsuitable to enter the sacred space, incredulity or even an attempt to cheat the god were not. The presence of people with such intentions inside the temple gave way to a popular miracle type, namely the punishment miracle.

I must briefly mention a space similar to the *abaton* in its name and partly in its function: the *adyton*. It was another space forbidden to enter, mostly described as the inner room of the sanctuary. Beside its limited accessibility, the function of the inner room is widely discussed. The concept of the *adyton* as a precise architectural unit dates from nineteenth-century scholarship and has been convincingly challenged.[39] The *adyton* was not a standard architectural term in Antiquity precisely because it could refer to several possible functions, as a venue for cult practices, even secret rites. Its main feature, its secludedness, often reflected its purpose to safeguard ecomonically valuable objects. Mary Hollinshead has pointed out that the *adyton* was not necessarily a cult space—its use in the Homeric Hymns[40] depicts it as a domestic space or storeroom, with Apollo opening its locked doors with a key. In this inner room precious goods were stored, nectar and ambrosia, gold and silver and fine garments, and its being *adyton* meant that it was protected and secluded by locked doors; later the word acquired the meaning of a place to which entry is forbidden in a ritual—cult context.[41]

Incubation Space in Christian Practice

The Christian incubation ritual owes a lot to its Greek predecessor. But just as a Greek temple is different from a Byzantine church building, the space used for incubation also differs. In the Christian context we do not have any separate building, but most often a part of the church was closed off for the ritual.[42]

38 Ael. Arist. *Or.* 47.32 = T 544.

39 Thalamann (1975).

40 *HHerm.* 246–248 (sixth century BCE).

41 Hollinshead (1999).

42 For the practice of using screens to separate space between the aisles, see Peschlow (2006).

There are Christian saints whose early cult centred on incubation and the miracle cures recorded at their cult site give a picture of clear-cut incubation healers (e.g. Saint Cosmas and Damian, Saint Cyrus and John or Saint Artemius). There were other saints, however, who cannot be called incubation healers *per se*, but whose worship and miracle-working activity occasionally included incubation (to some extent Saint Thecla, and several others, e.g. Saint Dometius, Saint Isaiah, Saint Therapon). The accidental nature of this activity is mirrored in the use of ritual space as well. Incubation was often a secondary function of an ordinary church: just as a side nave could be enough for the ritual, a saint's cult could also have such side-activities that varied from time to time and from place to place.[43] Without entering into details about the major differences between pagan and Christian incubation practice, I would like to stick to illustrating how their use of ritual space differed, focussing on the openness or closed-ness of the incubation places they used.

One of the major differences is that, unlike Asclepius, the Christian doctor-saints were by no means accessible to everyone. The patients who sought their help had to be Christians, and, what is more, Orthodox Christians. Nevertheless, pagans, Jews and heretics appear in miracle accounts. These, however, had specific roles in miracle narratives (like converting or receiving a punishment miracle). This well-defined clientele, along with the totally different theological framework of Christianity, meant a different conception of ritual purity as well.

In Christian incubation records,[44] we read about fasting, abstaining from eating meat during Lent, and abstaining from swearing. These, however, are not requirements of ritual purity before entering a sacred space or undergoing a ritual like those in the Asclepieian miracles, but rather general Christian observances. Quite often saints admonish the patients in a generally moralizing tone. What is more particular and characteristic of the Christian miracles is that saints do not heal everybody who turns to them piously, but that they set conditions. In the case of heretics or non-Christians, the saints' attention can only be secured by conversion or confession of the proper credo.

What we find repeatedly in the early Christian sources is that there are certain times when undergoing the incubation ritual is more advisable than on other occasions. Saturday nights, for example, were considered propitious in many cases in Byzantine churches—not only was Saturday night a proper time for undergoing the ritual, but, as we read in Artemius' miracles, the melting

43 Grossmann (2007).

44 See the bulk of hagiographic material in notes 5–8 above.

wax of candles lit on Saturday night was also considered more efficacious for ritual healing.

Being at the right time at the most efficacious spot: that is the essence of Christian incubation practice. Regarding its use of space, the incubation ritual is in a certain sense a unique liturgy within the Christian theological framework, since, although invocation of saints or the idea of their ubiquity were well-developed ideas in Christian religious practice, in incubation ritual (both pagan and Christian) the physical presence of the supplicant at the special place was of utmost importance. This older Greek idea that deities inhabit their temples mingled very interestingly with the new Christian theology surrounding the thaumaturgic powers of the saint's tombs, places of martyrdom and relics. What I would like to show, taking my examples from the Christian incubation material, is the following: that in many aspects incubation was a unique ritual against this rather different Christian background. The core of its uniqueness is reflected best in its use of sacred space. Sacred space was used within the incubation ritual in different way from the usual abstract theology that surrounded the cult of the saints in general. In incubation, the place is more important than the figure of the healer, whose therapeutic powers are strongly linked (and often even limited) to the cult place. Furthermore, Christian miracles exploit space by including it in narrative of the miraculous events: who is where, how the pilgrims move around the church space, and the crossing of boundaries are all frequent motifs in these miracle stories, highlighting the role of the entrance as a dividing line between the therapeutically-efficacious 'inside' and the profane 'outside' zones within the sanctuary space itself. Finally, the motifs 'who is where' and 'who passes the door' often include the saints themselves—and in this way the coming and going and the actual role of doors becomes a repeated trope in miracle stories.

The Case of Artemius: A Saint Behind His Own Doors

Among the incubation miracles of Saint Artemius, famed for an incubation cult in Constantinople in the sixth and seventh centuries that specialized in curing hernias, we find a story in which the hagiographer consciously raises the issue of the saint's power being linked to his sacred space. He does this in connection with a miracle in which Artemius seizes a dying girl out of the hands of the angels of death. The story is about a twelve-year-old girl suffering from the bubonic plague. The illness took possession of her to such a point that her parents were preparing her funeral. While she was laid out, unconscious and speechless, she saw:

> angels taking hold of her and Saint Artemius coming and with his right hand clasping the girl and saying to those angels who were rushing to lift her up: 'What are you doing? You are not removing her. Leave her to me, for I have accepted her and she is mine.' And with these words Saint Artemius, God's martyr, seized her, brought her into the church and led her down as it were to his own holy coffin; and opening the doors, stretched her out on the floor below the leaden chest where his sacred relics are stored. And leaving her there he secured the place, so it seemed, locking it. The angels who came, when they saw this, said nothing and withdrew.[45]

From this narrative we can draw the conclusion that the healer possessed one, physically well-defined space or sphere of action, within whose borders his power manifested itself with greater strength. Moreover, this space can be closed with doors and locked with a key the saint has with him.

It is worth examining more closely this zone of the saint's peculiar efficacy, both within the building and within the ritual, about which we have numerous and carefully detailed descriptions. Saint Artemius' coffin with his relics was kept in the church of Saint John the Baptist in the Oxeia quarter of Constantinople. It was a three-aisled basilica, with an atrium and a narthex (see fig. 4.1).[46] Here pilgrims were segregated according to sex. The men who came to consult Artemius were allowed to sleep in the left aisle, which was barred off during the night. The right aisle was most likely designed to be used by women, in what might have been the chapel of Saint Febronia.[47] The church that housed Artemius and Febronia had a forecourt and a porch which led into the narthex. The narthex probably opened into the central nave and the two aisles through three sets of doors. One miracle (*The Miracles of St Artemius* 32 = MA 32) mentions the central doors (literally the 'middle doors') implying that there were other entrances, one of which (that is, the left aisle door) probably led from the narthex into the north aisle, and another (the right aisle door) to the south.

When a worshipper entered the church, at the end of the central nave he or she could find the sacristy, with a *templon* in the middle, that had two

45 MA 34.

46 For the interior of the church, see Mango (1979) 40–43, Sodini (1981) 440–443, Crisafulli and Nesbitt (1997) 9–19; the floorplan Mango attached to his article was on several points modified by Sodini and Crisafulli and Nesbitt, yet it came reproduced unaltered in Crisafulli and Nesbitt (1997) 319.

47 Rydén (1985) 7–8; also Lieu (1996) 56.

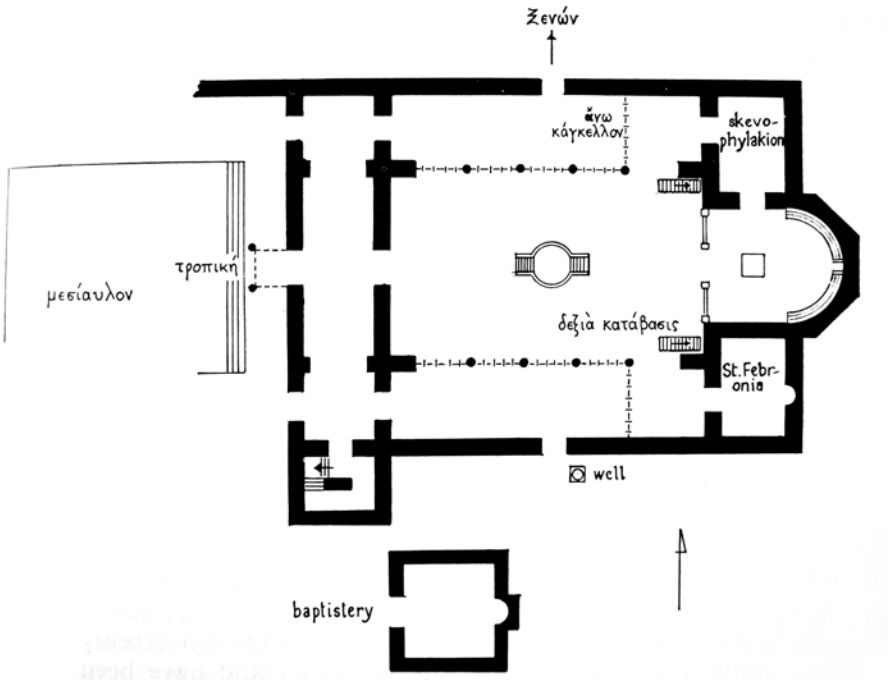


FIGURE 4.1 *Hypothetical plan of the Martyrium of St Artemius, Constantinople.* SOURCE: MANGO (1993) 9, FIG. 1.

entrances and one exit. In the centre there was the entrance with two columns; on the right side there was a staircase with a door, leading down the crypt where Artemius' coffin was housed, with a door also at the bottom of the staircase. On the left side there was another staircase, with the same set of doors at the top and bottom that served as the exit from the crypt. The staircases were located within the sanctuary area. The doors of the staircases were open during the day and the pilgrims descended on one side and came up on the other. In MA 19 we read that a man called George was in a hurry to descend to the coffin on the right staircase and slipped and rolled towards the lower doors that opened on the crypt. The coffin was suspended and there was some space underneath it. As we can see from the narrative of Artemius' rescue of the dying girl, described above, this was the most miraculous area in the church. To sleep there was considered a privilege restricted, for example, to people close to the emperor or very rich. More commonly it was used to set up votive lamps in honour of Artemius, the lamp oil from these lamps being used for healing, sometimes on the advice of the saint himself, but more often on the worshippers' initiative. Finally, in miracle stories we often read of the

'kankella' ('railing'), a set of removable barriers which enclosed the incubation space and were removed during the day. They were made of wood or metal, high enough to prevent people climbing over.

Based on the text of several passages in the miracles we can identify the icons above the doors: on the top of the central entrance there was a large image of Christ; above the right-side entrance leading to the crypt there was the image of Saint John the Baptist, while on the top of the left door, the exit from the crypt there was the icon of Saint Artemius. There was another door in the north wall of the church, within the space used for incubation. It has been interpreted either as the door leading to the *xenon*, i.e. the hospice,[48] or as the one that led to the latrines which figure in two of Artemius' miracles.[49] Archaeological research has confirmed that amenities such as washing rooms and latrines were often provided for men and women separately adjacent to the left and right side-aisles of the church in places where incubation was practiced.[50] These various doors and barriers inside the church have two functions in the miracle narratives. First, with their help the patients (and the hagiographer) can, by mentioning them, give very precise indications of location—from what point of view they saw the saint and where they were lying when the miracle happened. Thus they serve as proof for the truth of the narrative. Secondly, and most often, the doors are used to indicate the saint's presence: or, more precisely, his coming and going within the church.

Miracle MA 17 narrates the story of an aristocratic hernia-sufferer who went to incubate, taking with him an Alexandrian actor for company. We learn from it that only very special people were allowed to sleep under the saint's lead coffin, and only on Saturday night. The church personnel makes an exception for our protagonist, who can spend the night downstairs at the coffin, but his companion, the actor, has to sleep above in the church and when he wakes up at night to urinate, he finds all the four railings closed. Since he cannot leave, he urinates within the enclosure and subsequently develops a hernia by way of a punishment miracle. Because of his shouting, the aristocrat wakes up and pretending to feel ill, he demands the railings to be opened for him and scolds his companion. This anecdote highlights features of the spatial structure described above, neatly isolating three types of space within the church: 1. the ultra-sacred space below the relics where incubation took place only

48 Cyril Mango, on the basis of MA 6, identifies the door in the north wall of the church as leading to a *xenon*/hospice: Mango (1979) 40–43.

49 Nesbitt, in his 'Introduction' to Crisafulli and Nesbitt (1997), writes on page 12 that it was more likely the door leading to the latrines, on the basis of MA 35.

50 Grossmann (2007) 127.

occasionally, and which was regarded as the most efficacious area, which, as mentioned above, had four doors, two sets on both sides downstairs, and two sets above, which were open during the day and locked at night. 2. the normal space designated for incubation, the left and right aisles of the church, open during the day but shut off for the night with the help of temporary railings that were removed in the morning. 3. the rest of the church space which was not used for incubation.

In a miracle-narrative MA 25 we read that the enclosure that separated the incubation space was always locked at night. More interesting is what another miracle story tells in addition: miracle MA 38 depicts the opening and closing doors as proof of the saint's passing through these railings: we learn that a certain man called George, while sleeping in the left aisle, saw in his dream Saint Artemius exiting the sanctuary and behind him Saint John the Baptist and Saint Febronia. George witnesses the saints passing through the railing, which was near the sacristy, and making their way to the side aisle where the sick men were sleeping.[51]

The motif of the miraculous opening of the doors is found also with more details in MA 32. In this story, the doors of the crypt and of the central gates were locked, but automatically opened when the saint appeared. The patient in his dream (the story indicates his precise location, namely by the fourth column of the left colonnade) saw Artemius rise from his coffin, pass through the railing of the sacristy, and then going to the central gates where he stretched himself out on the floor to pray. The man in his dream wondered why the saint was not wearing his cloak, only a garment called 'alb' with a belt and a stole, and we hear his remarkable conclusions. He thought that since Artemius 'resides here and since he is in his own house, he is comfortable here in such an outfit' and continues: 'Again, I was reflecting about the railing and the central gates, how, although locked, they automatically opened for him and he went in.' Through the uses of doors the story illustrates the concept—rather odd in a Christian context—that these particular incubation saints in Byzantium behave as masters of their own houses, very much like Greek pagan deities, who were considered to inhabit their temples.[52]

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51 '... on the thirty-eighth day as he lay sleeping in the left aisle, in his sleep he saw St Artemius as though exiting from the sanctuary, and behind him the Forerunner clad in a sheepskin; and behind both of them St Febronia.... As they passed through the railing which was near the sacristy and made their way through the side aisle where the sick men were reclining, the Forerunner as he went by cast his gaze upon each one ...', translation Crisafulli and Nesbitt (1997) 199.

52 Explored more in detail by Bozóky (2003).

Violating the Sacred Territory: Who is Allowed to Stay Where

The story of the actor highlights a practical problem regarding sacred space: not everybody was allowed to stay and sleep in any place in the church. If someone was not an incubant, he was not supposed to sleep in the area reserved for the incubation patients. In the case of Artemius, women and men slept separately in enclosures in the two side aisles that were barred by railings at night. While segregation of male and female patients is documented in the cult of Artemius, stories from other saints' miracle-collections attest that women and men could sleep within the same space. Sometimes we find families spending the night together and such figures who were not patients-pilgrims themselves could become the catalyst of their relative's miraculous cure. There are incubation miracles stories that teach a lesson with a story involving rich and poor pilgrims who share the same space, but we also read occasionally about special places inside the church where the rich could install themselves.

We also hear about persons who only accompanied the patients and were not sick themselves: not only family members or servants, but a friend, a doctor or a hired entertainer like the actor above. Women and men, poor and rich benefitted equally from the attention of the saints. The dividing line among the patients was elsewhere: for non-Christians and heretics experiencing the divine apparition was radically different. This anti-heretic trait within the dynamics of the miracle is most articulated in the miracle stories of saint Cosmas and Damian, who were the most famous incubation healers and doctor saints in the Mediterranean.[53] They had six churches in Constantinople alone, among which the Cosmidion was the third most prominent church in the city (after the Blachernae and Hagia Sophia). From their miracle accounts we have some knowledge about space division in this particular church. Those who went for a cure slept in the *catechumenion*.[54] It was also possible for someone who wanted more privacy within this church space to set up isolating screens or curtains. We have the story of a wealthy woman[55] who installed herself in the colonnade and separated her 'apartment' with curtains: clearly, then, there was no segregation by sex in the doctor saints' cult as there was in Artemius'. In other stories, the rich and the poor lie in the same place. In another miracle[56] the patient stays in the *catechumenion* during the day but goes to sleep at night near the altar. It must have been the wrong place, since no cure arrived and he

53 For the editions of their miracles, see footnote 5.

54 KDM 3, 12, 21, 23.

55 KDM 12.

56 KDM 21.

decided to leave. But for this last time, he ended up sleeping in the *catechumenion*, for it was already too late to go home, and here, finally, he saw the dream he had been waiting for.

More interesting are the cases where staying at a certain spot was not a matter of personal choice but either a taboo or an obligation.[57] Numerous incubation miracle stories concern heretics, especially Arians, but also non-Christians, Jews and pagans, and from these accounts we learn that they were not allowed or not willing to sleep among the true believers. To show why they were included into the narrative at all and how they regarded sacred space, the most illustrative miracle story is the one in which a worshipper of Cosmas and Damian, who went regularly to their church, was once accompanied by his pagan friend.[58] While the Christian man goes inside the church to practice incubation in the smaller baptistery near the *diaconion*, his pagan friend stays outside in the narthex. While he was waiting he also fell asleep. In his dream he saw three children dividing a piece of bread and eating it. Still in sleep, he realized his error—not only was he sleeping in a forbidden place, but he had witnessed the mystery of the Eucharist. The miracle then gives us precious information about an otherwise undocumented law: that a pagan witnessing the Eucharist was liable to the death penalty. The man, seized with terror but still in his dream, promises to convert to Christianity. In the same collection, a similar story describes a miracle involving a patient who was also an Arian heretic,[59] mentioning that the man did not dare to sleep in the appropriate place, only in the *external narthex*.[60] In these narratives, as in many other miracles involving heretics, heresy is often described in medical terms, not just figuratively, as a sickness of the soul which manifests itself in bodily illnesses such as blindness. Similarly, the remedies suggested by the doctor saints in such cases also play on the dichotomy of body and soul. Most eloquent are cases where the Eucharist is taken as a remedy, almost like a pill. In all these incubation miracle collections, the taking of the Eucharist figures only in cases of pagans or heretics, never in those of faithful Christians.[61]

57 Examples from Marian cult, both of simple worship and healing, where Mary prohibits or controls entry for heretics are given by Krueger (2011).

58 KDM 10. On the basis of the stories I refer to here there is not enough evidence to draw a proper floorplan; I use the space names as described in the text.

59 KDM 17.

60 An open-air narthex is mentioned also in KDM 30.

61 Cf. Csepregi (2006).

Fear of entering the sacred space, although one was ardently seeking a miracle from that very place, was a common experience. Gregory of Tours[62] tells a miracle story that involves a certain Jew who went to the basilica of the incubation healer saint Dometius in Syria.[63] He considered himself unworthy to enter the sanctuary ('to cross the sacred lintel') and thus he went to sleep at the doorway of the atrium:

> … he asked to be brought to the entrance of the courtyard and cried that he was unworthy to cross the holy threshold … After he said this in front of the gate of the courtyard, night came and he fell asleep. But the blessed martyr … during that night approached the ill man in a dream and ordered him to depart with his health. The Jew awoke and realized that he had been restored to health.[64]

Another reason for remaining outside the healing place can be the illness itself, which can render the sick person so helpless that even turning to the healer involved serious difficulties. In Christian hagiography, narratives modelled on the story of Jesus' curing the paralytic man at Lake Bethesda who was unable himself to enter the healing water,[65] reflect what was no doubt a frequent experience of the sick and the ailing everywhere and at all times. Gregory of Tours records a story about a certain woman who did not enter the church, but slept outside in the porch next to the basilica of Saint Julian. A man appeared to her in her dream and asked why she remained outside away from the relics, while inside the all-night vigil was being celebrated on Sunday night. She told the man in her dream that she was in pain and too weak to go inside; the man—that is, the saint himself—helped her to the tomb. She felt her limbs regain their strength and health.[66]

This narrative has a challenging element in its story pattern that is most relevant to the topic of this article. The appearing saint could have, obviously, cured the woman on the spot but he did not. His helping her inside serves a

62 Greg. Tur. *Glor. mart.* 99.

63 On Saint Dometius and his incubation cult, see Peeters (1939).

64 'Seque ad ianuam atrii deponi praecipiens, indignum se esse vociferans, qui sanctum limen ingrederetur … Haec cum ante portam aulae fateretur, adveniente nocte obdormivit; sed martyr beatus … ea nocte visitans aegrotum per somnium iussit recedere sanum. At ille expergefactus sentit se redditum incolomitati … sanus abscessit,' van Dam (1988) 123.

65 John 5:1–15.

66 Greg. Tur. *Iul.* 9.

double purpose, both in the narrative and in the dynamics of the miracle. On the one hand, he conducts the woman to his own, well-defined place, thus fulfilling the narrative pattern identified in the examples discussed earlier. This confirms that the saint's miraculous power is bound to a particular place. The fact that it is localized means that it is much stronger at his tomb, at the place of the relics. On the other hand, making the suppliant enter the church and the vicinity of the sacred relics renders her part of the community of worshippers who approach the saints and both physically and spiritually involves her in the customary settings of the ritual. Making her enter the sacred space is giving her what she came for, fulfilling her expectations, completing her own vision of the ritual, 'as it should be'. Leading her to the tomb is also a signal for those who are already there—a confirmation that they are already at the right place, that this is where miracles happen and an invitation to embrace the new member of this temporary community of worshippers gathered around the relics in the hope of experiencing, witnessing and sharing a miraculous event with each other.

The Sanctuary Door as Centre of the Miracle

There are temple doors that are barred not simply with locks, but by their ritual significance: not only do they regulate the worshippers, but they also safeguard in a more abstract way the sacred character of the building itself. From the end of Antiquity we have a Christian account of the symbolic importance of the doorway of an Asclepieion, depicting the fate of the Greek temple's columns that is emblematic of the end of paganism. The *History* of Zonaras tells of the events that took place in 362 between Emperor Julian and the Christians of Aegae, a place famous for its Asclepius temple, during which the Greeks wanted their temple columns back, that were taken and already built in by the Christians. But, miraculously from the Christian point of view, the column becomes so heavy that it cannot be taken over the threshold of the church door:[67]

> He (Julian) set his army in motion against the Persians and arrived at Tarsus, a famous city of Cilicia. When he had arrived there, Artemius, the priest of Asclepius, approached him—for in Aegae (this, too, a city of Cilicia) there was a renowned temple of Asclepius—and requested that he restore again to the temple of Asclepius the columns which the

67 Zonaras, *Hist.* 13.1–19, translation Banchich and Lane (2009) 174.

> archpriest of the people of the Christians had removed and upon which he had built his church. The transgressor straightaway commanded that this be done at the bishop's expense. Then the Hellenes, when they, with much labour and with the greatest cost, had barely taken down one of the columns and moved it with machines as far as the threshold of the door of the church, even after a great length of time were unable to get it outside. They abandoned it and departed. And after Julian had died, the bishop easily righted it again and returned it to its spot.

The different grades of thaumaturgic power in relation to the vicinity of the sacred space[68] could manifest itself in the concept of concentric circles. The phenomenon of approaching the sanctuary door, the worshipper's progress and the heightening of miracle-working power as a pilgrim neared the place can be described as a system of concentric circles, in which entrance through the church door eventually brings completion of the miracle. In the *Thaumata* of Sophronius recording the incubation miracles of Saint Cyrus and John near Alexandria,[69] we read the story of a sixth century Egyptian camel-driver, who became deaf and decided to go to the church of the famous doctor saints in Menouthis. As he left the first city gate of Alexandria, his ears began to open and the closer he got to the church, the better he felt, his hearing returning gradually. When he reached the doors of the sanctuary of the saints, he entered completely cured.[70] Although, like this story, my last example comes from outside the incubation context, it still belongs within the sphere of Byzantine miraculous healing, and the role played by the sanctuary door renders it in many ways the most suitable narrative with which to conclude this paper. The story, which has the sanctuary doors as its protagonist, comes from the anonymous miracle collection centering on the church of the Virgin Mary of the Pege (the 'Spring'), outside Constantinople, redacted in the tenth century. The miracle-working water and the church are documented from the fifth century to the present, although the sixth-century church the miracle describes survived only until the fifteenth or sixteenth centuries.[71] A lady, who previously was cured by the miraculous spring, when she fell ill again sent two servants to the sanctuary to bring her some of the water. The servants find the main doors of the

68 For more on this aspect, see Iles Johnston (2004) 268–271, and Alcock and Osborne (1994).

69 See note 6 above.

70 MCJ 45; the concentric circles that mark the strengthening of the miraculous powers are well known from both healing and punishment miracles. See Wacht, s.v. 'Inkubation' RAC 181, 207 ff.

71 Anonymous miracles of the *Pege*, chapter 23, in Talbot and Johnson (2012) 259–263.

sanctuary closed, as the evening hymns had finished and no outsiders were allowed to enter afterwards. They hear from the other side of the closed doors a female voice that directs them to the side entrance, a chapel door near the basin that would be open for them. No women were permitted to spend time inside the church. Three times this command had to be repeated until they found the door and entered, meeting a monk who was also summoned by the female voice to help them. Here finding the door to the sanctuary is the miracle itself: with the Virgin's help the servants gain access to her life-giving water. It emblematically represents how rules around the sanctuary, such as the closing and opening of doors, excluding outsiders, regulating the entrance of women and access to the thaumaturgic objects, are overwritten and how the miracle comes precisely from breaking these rules of access.

The Doorway as a Symbolic Space

The last three miracle stories highlighted in a tangible way how the sanctuary door functioned in a symbolic way. The earlier examples showed how the actual entrance to the sanctuary was related to more abstract concepts, such as ritual purity or professing the 'right' beliefs. The doorway functions in a double, both in a symbolic and a concrete way: as an invisible barrier-line, and as a markedly visible and tangible object that signals prohibition (closed doors) or acceptance (open doors). This double role of the sanctuary door is even more marked if we consider the following. As an abstract concept, the door often controls a very real situation, while on the other hand the visible and real sanctuary doors could stand in reference to the invisible miraculous power that dwelt within the sanctuary.

Another double aspect: physically entering and leaving through the sanctuary door, in our cases most often in a different physical condition (cured, if the suppliant had benefited from the miracle, or maimed if he or she had received a punishment) went hand in hand with the ritual and spiritual transformation of the pilgrims, who—while being inside the sacred space—underwent a religious experience that could even change their soul. As a kind of concrete ritual metaphor for this physical and spiritual alteration inside and outside the sanctuary space, the incubation experience found an appropriate model in the many-faceted roles the sanctuary door could assume.

In incubation practice, entering the sacred space and being there were not only prerequisites of the ritual, but the first part of the religious experience as well. The importance of the place, the worshippers' presence at the spot, the physical ailments and the bodily cure they expected went along with the other

essential aspects of the ritual: the thaumaturgic powers that were linked to the place, the healers' manifested presence at their cult site, the fact that the divine could be so easily approached—and ultimately, a healing of the body that mirrored the healing of the soul. The expression of these essential elements can be found in our opening motto: *Bonus intra, melior exi*![72]

Bibliography

Abbreviations

CIL *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum.* See for the volumes: http://cil.bbaw.de/cil_en/index_en.html

KDM The miracles as described in Deubner (1907) and Festugière (1971)

MA The miracles as described in Crisafulli and Nesbitt (1997)

MCJ The miracles as described in Gascou (2006), Herzog (1939), Montserrat (1998) and Sansterre (1991)

RAC (1950– …) *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*. Stuttgart.

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PART 2

Symbolism and Allegory of Sanctuary Doors

∵

CHAPTER 5

Sanctuary Doors, Vestibules and *Adyta* in the Works of Neoplatonic Philosophers

Lucia M. Tissi

The symbolism of the door conveys a universal meaning that, though developed in different patterns, is traceable to many societies. However, when we investigate symbols, we cannot neglect the cultural and historical context we are dealing with.[1] Therefore, any investigation of symbolic significance must take into account place, time and context.

In this paper I explore in what manner the crossing sacred thresholds and passing through the doors of sanctuaries involve an intellectual and spiritual experience. I will focus on a specific cultural context, namely that of so-called Neoplatonic philosophy.[2] My aim is not to provide an exhaustive overview, which would probably fill an entire book, but to attempt to sketch out how sanctuary doors were regarded as places of transition by some of the philosophers deeply influenced by Platonic thought who lived between the fourth-sixth century CE. Furthermore, I will investigate the role played by other essential areas within sanctuaries, closely associated with the doors of the sanctuaries themselves: the vestibules, which form a significant space before the doors, and of the *adyta*, the interior sections of the temple. As we will see, sacred spaces are considered both in a literary and metaphoric sense: consequently transitions between different spaces imply different semantic levels.

1 As Mircea Eliade pointed out 'le symbolisme ajoute une nouvelle valeur à un objet ou à une action, sans pour autant porter atteinte à leurs valeurs propres et immédiates. En s'appliquant à un objet ou à une action, le symbolisme les rend "ouverts". La pensée symbolique fait "éclater" la vérité immédiate, mais sans l'amoindrir ni la dévaloriser etc.' (Eliade (1952) 234, n. 1). The same concepts are traceable in René Guénon's thought (1962).

2 For an introduction into Neoplatonism, see Romano (1983), (1988); Dillon (2004); Di Pasquale Barbanti and Martello (2006), Remes and Slaveva-Griffin (2014). For Neoplatonic exegesis, see Coulter (1976) and Sheppard (1980).

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Vestibules, Doors and *Adyta* as Metaphors

Vestibules

Before crossing the door to the sanctuary and entering its inner part, let us begin our imaginative path with the vestibules, a kind of waiting hall where we receive a prevision of the steps that follow.

The image of vestibules, i.e. of spaces situated before physical doors and acting as an extension of the demarcation between different areas, is very common in Neoplatonic philosophy. Among Neoplatonists, the main entrance to a temple is usually connected to the Good, to Philosophy and *logos*. This place has a crucial meaning in the initiation process: Beauty, Truth and Proportion, for instance, can be found in 'the vestibule of the Good' as already stated by Plato. The Neoplatonic philosopher Proclus (fifth century CE) often used[3] the image of the so-called 'vestibule of the Good or of Reason', drawn from Plato's *Philebus* 64c1.[4] In the *Theologia Platonica*, dealing with the Triad of Beauty, Truth and Proportion, Proclus explores the reason 'why Socrates says that he found this Triad in the vestibules of the Good (ἐν προθύροις εἶναι τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ)' (3.11, p. 44.9 S.-W.).[5] This Triad alludes to three epistemological stages, esthetical, ethical and mathematical, through which we can access the inner *sanctum* of the Good (Philosophy-Reason), on the basis of a hierarchical scheme working both on a 'vertical' and a 'horizontal' axis. In fact access to the divine requires ethical, epistemological and intellectual preparation. First of all, we have to shed our human passions, conceived, in accordance with Orphic imagery, as a 'tunic'. This process of the soul's ascent to the divine involves a radical transformation that consists in unveiling and disrobing ourselves in order to reveal our bare nature, the last tunic being ambition (φιλοτιμία). Actually, desiring honours concerns people who remain in the vestibule of Reason, and is related to the Platonic theory of the descent of the soul: 'if the first descent of the souls is composed by ambitious life, the desires for honours clearly do not belong to those who fall to the bottom of the abyss, but to those who live in the

3 See the references to *Philebus* in Procl. *In Tim.* 2.267.20–21, 269.8–9 and 3.66.14–15 Diehl; *In Remp*. 1.295.21 Kroll. Proclus associated Helios with Truth, Aphrodite with Beauty, Hermes with Proportion: Procl. *In Tim.* 3.69.10–14 Diehl.

4 For Proclus' commentary on the *Philebus*, see Combès (1987).

5 Actually, on the basis of the Proclean triadic scheme or form, a 'constitutive element of his thought and of every existing reality', the first intelligible Triad is Limit, the Unlimited and Mixture. See Beierwaltes (1990) 71.

vestibule of Reason (ἐν προθύροις τοῦ λόγου)' (*In Alc.* 1.139, p. 115.3–6 Segonds).[6] Moreover, besides Truth and Proportion, Beauty too symbolises the prevision of the mysteries of the Good (*Theol. Plat.* 3.18, p. 64.6–12 S.-W.):

> Καὶ ὥσπερ **ἐν ταῖς ἁγιωτάταις τελεταῖς** πρὸ τῶν μυστικῶν θεαμάτων ἔκπληξις τῶν μυουμένων, οὕτω δὴ κἀν τοῖς νοητοῖς πρὸ τῆς τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ μετουσίας τὸ κάλλος προφαινόμενον ἐκπλήττει τοὺς ὁρῶντας καὶ ἐπιστρέφει τὴν ψυχὴν καὶ δείκνυσιν **ἐν τοῖς προθύροις ἱδρυμένον** οἷόν ἐστιν ἄρα τὸ ἐν τοῖς ἀδύτοις καὶ τὸ κρύφιον ἀγαθόν.
>
> And as in the most holy of the mysteries, prior to the mystic spectacles, those that are initiated are seized with astonishment, so in the sphere of intelligible entities, prior to the participation of the Good, Beauty shining forth astonishes those that behold it, it converts the soul, and being established in the vestibules [of the Good] it shows what is the Good which is hidden in the *adyta*.
>
> TRANSL. TAYLOR (1816), REVISED

This mystic prevision of the Good through Beauty is characterised by astonishment, a typical feature of miracles and mystery rituals. Going further, Proclus compares the superiority of the Good to Beauty with the superiority of the Demiurge to the all-complete living being:

> And as Good is prior to Beauty, [for the first Beauty, as Socrates says in the *Philebus*, is in the vestibules of the Good], so likewise the best is prior to the most beautiful, and the demiurge is prior to the all-complete living being.[7]
>
> *THEOL. PLAT.* 5.29, P. 106.6–10 S.-W.

Beauty, Truth and Proportion form the indispensable antechamber that must be crossed before entering the *adyton* of the Good. The phrases Proclus employs to describe this process of self-transformation allude, on the basis of Plato's thought,[8] to the connection between philosophical initiation and mystery rites,

6 In the vestibule of Knowledge there are also mathematical substances (Procl. *In Eucl.* 5.2 Friedlein) and imagination (Procl. *In Eucl.* 55.2 Friedlein).

7 The same reference to the *Philebus* recurs in Damascius (*Princ.* 1.122.15–18 Westerink = 1.81.4 Ruelle). See also Dam. *Princ.* 1.98.22 W. (1.65.24 R.), 2.21.7 W. (1.98.16 R.), 3.142.9 W. (1.305.7 R.) and *In Phil.* 2.5 van Riel.

8 Riedweg (1987) 67–69; Morgan (1990) 80–99, Wilson Nightingale (2005) 151–180.

specifically the Eleusinian mysteries.[9] The above-mentioned Platonic Triad refers, therefore, to the well-known Eleusinian one (τὰ δρώμενα, τὰ λεγόμενα, τὰ δεικνύμενα). Proclus' interest in Eleusinian mystery rituals, which is typical of a certain philosophical tradition, also stems from biographical reasons, since he knew the daughter of Nestorius, the Eleusinian hierophant, and admired her as a custodian of the most sacred traditions.[10] More interestingly, the analogy mystery-philosophy implies a didactic connotation. A teacher of philosophy can be compared to an initiatory guide who, through words and actions, introduces the young initiated, the disciple, into the vestibule of philosophical mysteries (Procl. *In Alc.* 1.61, p. 50.13–51.2 Segonds):

> ὥσπερ οὖν ἐν ταῖς ἁγιωτάταις τῶν τελετῶν προηγοῦνται τῶν δρωμένων καταπλήξεις τινές, αἱ μὲν διὰ τῶν λεγομένων, αἱ δὲ διὰ τῶν δεικνυμένων ὑποκατακλίνουσαι τῷ θείῳ τὴν ψυχήν, οὕτω δὴ καὶ **ἐν τοῖς τῆς φιλοσοφίας προθύροις** ἀνεγείρει θαῦμα τῷ νεανίσκῳ καὶ ἔκπληξιν περὶ ἑαυτὸν ὁ καθηγούμενος, ἵνα δράσωσιν εἰς αὐτὸν οἱ λόγοι προϊόντες καὶ ἐκκαλέσωνται πρὸς τὴν φιλόσοφον ζωήν.
>
> Therefore, just as the rituals in the holiest representations of initiations are preceded by some reverential fears—some caused by words, others by the objects shown, so that the soul is dominated by the divine—in the same manner, in Philosophy's vestibule, the teacher stirs admiration and wonder about himself in the young disciple, in order that the teacher's words, proceeding towards the disciple, have an effect on him and stimulate him to a philosophical life.

As in the previous passage drawn from *Theologia Platonica*, astonishment (ἔκπληξις) stands at the core of the initiatory path and works as a protreptic means to spur the initiated.

Doors

Let us continue our journey by looking at the meaning of doors in Neoplatonic philosophy. Before analysing the door's initiatory and eschatological significance, I will offer a glimpse of some fascinating linguistic features, which cast light on the evolution of its mystic connotation. In fact, words and etymologies can sometimes help us to understand apparently odd correlations.

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9 See also *Theol. Plat.* 1.20, p. 96.5 S.-W. (and commentary on pp. 155–156).

10 Burkert (1987) 113; Addey (2014) 52–54.

The correlation between door and initiation is captured by the Latin word *ianua*, which is linked to the verb *ire* (Sanskrit *yana*): *in-ire* and *in-itiatio* mean to pass from one state into another.[11] Since a door can be crossed in both directions, inwards and outwards, it thus holds a liminal function, so that crossing its threshold represents a transformation.[12] Liminality is, as underlined by van Opstall in the introduction of the present volume, a central theoretical concept in any investigation on doors. Moreover, the symbolism of the door recalls, even if it is not explicitly linked to the temple, the idea of a holy or sacred delimitation, of a passage from profane to holy, from darkness to light, from *genesis* (coming into being) to *apogenesis* (passing away).[13] This initiatory and eschatological significance, already discernible in the Vedic juxtaposition between *devaloka*, the door of men, turned toward darkness, and *pitrloka*, the door of gods, turned towards light (*Bhagavadgita* 8.26), has also been adopted by Greek thought. The so-called 'Mithrasliturgie', for instance, a well-known text on mystic initiation (ἐποπτεία), transmitted by a magical papyrus and dated about the fourth century CE, (*PGM* 4.475–829),[14] features various *Türoffnungen* and a *Wiedergeburt im Tod*. I will provide here a short summary, to better understand the role played by this famous description in the representation and perception of the significance of doors. At the beginning of this magic ritual, the initiated (μύστης) is represented in front of the solar disk, where he utters a magical prayer and invites to silence. After making a hissing sound and a popping sound twice, he is described as seeing many five-tipped stars coming forth from the disk and filling the air. Silent once more, he is able to see the fireless circle and the fiery doors, which are shut tight. However, only after closing his eyes and reciting a prayer followed by silence, he finally sees (once he reopens his eyes) the doors open and the world of the gods therein (ἄνοιξον τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς καὶ ὄψῃ ἀνεῳγυῖας τὰς θύρας καὶ τὸν κόσμον θεῶν). The joy caused by this divine vision enables his spirit to ascend. In this enchanting ritual, celestial doors hold a dividing function between the initiated and the divine cosmos. In a similar way, in Mithraism,

11 There are two main gods associated with this liminal idea, Janus (see Cic. *Nat. D.* 2.27,67) and Hecate. Janus, the two-faced God, has one face turned towards the sky and the other towards the earth and he holds two keys, a golden and a silver one; Hecate is described as a possessor of keys. See Simonini (1986) 198 n. 82.

12 Sometimes instead of one liminal door we find the image of two doors leading to two opposite paths. This dichotomy between two doors/paths and the inner and the external space of a unique liminal door mirrors the guiding thread of a symbolic tradition (e.g. Heracles at the crossroads).

13 The term 'profane' itself derives from *pro* + *fanum*, out in front of the temple.

14 Dieterich (1966^3); Meyer (2012) 447ff.

the torchbearer (δᾳδοφόρος) Cautopates, holding a big key in his left hand, opens and closes the bolts of the sky to allow the life-generating water to pour forth.[15] Not surprisingly, the enquirers at the oracular sanctuary of Claros, once initiated, walked through a maze located under the temple and, after crossing the threshold (the verb employed is ἐμβατεύειν), reached the *adyton*, the inner, divine part of the temple.[16]

This description of the door's mystic symbolism in magical, initiatory texts and in ritual *praxeis* is relevant from our perspective, since it did not go unnoticed in a learned reader such as the Neoplatonic philosopher Porphyry. The Tyrian philosopher, who had an in-depth knowledge of Eastern culture, employed symbolic modes of expression such as allegory and metaphor, fostering the idea of a hidden meaning to be decoded.[17] As is well known, Platonic philosophers, probably influenced by the ancient models of initiation and secrecy, believed that allegorical exegesis mirrored the metaphysical and multi-layered structure of the universe.[18] According to Porphyry, the two legendary entrances to Ithaca's cave where Odysseus lands (Hom. *Od.* 13.102–112) correspond to the tropics of Cancer and Capricorn and represent the descent and ascent of souls. These doors are indeed 'emblematic of the passage between two worlds, between light and darkness, the known and unknown: they give access to the mystery.'[19] The door is hence conceived, as in the previous cases, as a place of dynamic transition between two states, the profane and the sacred.

Initiation, however, does not only involve a passage from a human state to a divine one, but also a gnoseological transformation. In fact, the door is also perceived as a liminal border between ignorance and knowledge, a dichotomous pairing analogous to obscurity and light. In the *Corpus Hermeticum*, for instance, 'the door of knowledge' gives access to a luminous space where obscurity does not exist. Here purity refers also to a ritual, individual status and is reinforced by the idea of the passage from a perilous inebriation to sobriety, which leads to the divine (7.2.1–5):

> μὴ συγκατενεχθῆτε τοιγαροῦν τῷ πολλῷ ῥεύματι, ἀναρροίᾳ δὲ χρησάμενοι, οἱ δυνάμενοι λαβέσθαι τοῦ τῆς σωτηρίας λιμένος, ἐνορμισάμενοι τούτῳ, **ζητήσατε χειραγωγὸν τὸν ὁδηγήσοντα ὑμᾶς ἐπὶ τὰς τῆς γνώσεως θύρας, ὅπου ἐστὶ τὸ λαμπρὸν φῶς**, τὸ καθαρὸν σκότους, ὅπου οὐδὲ εἷς μεθύει, ἀλλὰ πάντες νήφουσιν,

15 Simonini (1986) 202–203.

16 Busine (2005) 194; Addey (2014) 56.

17 Addey (2014) 59.

18 Addey (2014) 65 and 81.

19 Translated from Simonini (1986) 194 n. 78.

> ἀφορῶντες τῇ καρδίᾳ εἰς τὸν ὁραθῆναι θέλοντα· οὐ γάρ ἐστιν ἀκουστός, οὐδὲ λεκτός, οὐδὲ ὁρατὸς ὀφθαλμοῖς, ἀλλὰ νῷ καὶ καρδίᾳ.
>
> Surely you will not sink in this great flood (of ignorance), but taking the ebb those of you who can will gain the haven of deliverance and anchor there. Then, seek a guide to take you by the hand and lead you to the portals of knowledge. There shines the luminous light cleansed of darkness. There no one is drunk. All are sober and gaze with the heart toward one who wishes to be seen who is neither heard nor spoken of, who is seen not with eyes but with mind and heart.
>
> TRANSL. COPENHAVER (1992), REVISED

Thereafter, in the same text, the initiated is invited to rip off the tunic of ignorance, which suffocates and impedes him, so that he can receive the fair vision of truth and of the good that lies within. The door signifies, therefore, the ontologically and epistemologically incommensurable gap between profane and initiated. This concept, which had great fortune in mystery rituals, implies a perception of knowledge as a path practicable only by the few initiates. It is not by chance that the Pythagoreans use a specific symbolic language code from which the profane are excluded due to their position as outsiders: 'But in the presence of those [who are] outside the doors and, so to speak, profane, if ever one were present, these men spoke obscurely to one another by means of symbols' (Iambl. *VP* 32.227, p. 122.4–5 Deubner. Transl. Dillon and Hershbell (1991)). Within this framework, hawking initiatory knowledge and opening its doors to everyone is regarded as an act of deplorable offense: παραιτήσασθαι δὲ λέγονται τοὺς τὰ μαθήματα καπηλεύοντας καὶ τὰς ψυχὰς **ὡς πανδοχείου θύρας** ἀνοίγοντας παντὶ τῷ προσιόντι τῶν ἀνθρώπων κτλ ('They are said to have deprecated those who peddle learning, and who have opened their souls, like the doors of an inn, to everyone entering', Iambl. *VP* 34.245, p. 131.13–15 Deubner. Transl. Dillon and Hershbell (1991)). This statement recalls another image attested in a similar initiatory context. In a famous Orphic fragment, profane people who are unable to uncover the meaning of the secret and divine words are required to close their doors.[20] This elitist idea does not simply mirror a ritual consideration, but seems to be corroborated by the spread of a symbolical exegesis at a poetic level: only a public of initiates can penetrate the hidden significance

20 Fr. Orph. 1b Bernabé (13+59+334 Kern), 3 B., 19 B. (13 Kern), 74 B. (59 K.), 101 B. (334 K.), 377.1 B. (245.1 K.), 378.1 B. (247.1 K.): Φθέγξομαι οἷς θέμις ἐστί, θύρας δ' ἐπίθεσθε, βέβηλοι. This verse was reused by Porphyry (*De Stat.* fr. 351 Smith, *ap*. Eus. *PE* 3.6.7–7.1). See Bernabé (1996) and Jourdan (2010) 180–181.

of holy texts. Going back to Porphyry, at the beginning of his *Philosophia ex oraculis haurienda*,[21] the injunction to keep oracular responses secret and to move profane people away from the inner sanctum of philosophy recalls Orphic imagery. Likewise, in the sixth century CE, another Neoplatonic philosopher, Olympiodorus, quoted the Orphic verse with a similar purpose. He explains the practice of hiding meanings that is appropriate to Apollo Loxias and to other characters, and finally concludes that: ὅπερ οὖν Ἀπόλλωνι μὲν τὸ λοξόν, ἱερεῦσι δὲ τὰ παραπετάσματα, ποιηταῖς δὲ οἱ μῦθοι, Πυθαγόρᾳ δὲ τὰ ὀνείρατα, Πλάτωνι δὲ αἱ μέθαι, τοῦτο Ἀριστοτέλει πέφυκεν ἡ ἀσάφεια ('Therefore, the nature of Apollo is ambiguity, that of priests veils, of poets myths, of Pythagoras dreams, of Plato drunkenness, and of Aristotle obscurity', Olymp. *Prol. in Cat.* 12.14–17 Busse).[22] Surprisingly, the idea of knowledge as reserved to a selected few is rejected in a noteworthy passage of Olympiodorus' *Commentary on the First Alcibiades*. Plato's main merit consists, according to the author, in having freed himself from the pompousness of the Pythagoreans and thus having opened the 'doors of knowledge' to the multitudes (*In Alc.* 2.152–64 Westerink):

> **ἀπήλλακτο δὲ καὶ τοῦ σεμνοῦ ὄγκου τῶν Πυθαγορείων καὶ τοῦ ἀποκεκλεισμένας ἔχειν τὰς θύρας καὶ τοῦ 'αὐτὸς ἔφα', πολιτικώτερον ἑαυτὸν παρέχων πρὸς ἅπαντας.** πολλοὺς τοίνυν ἐραστὰς αὑτοῦ καταστήσας καὶ πλείστους ὠφελήσας, μέλλων τελευτᾶν ἐνύπνιον εἶδεν ὡς κύκνος γενόμενος ἀπὸ δένδρου εἰς δένδρον μετέρχεται καὶ ταύτῃ πόνον πλεῖστον παρεῖχε τοῖς ἰξευταῖς. ὃ Σιμμίας ὁ Σωκρατικὸς ἔκρινεν, ὅτι ἄληπτος ἔσται τοῖς μετ' αὐτὸν ἐξηγεῖσθαι βουλομένοις αὐτόν· ἰξευταῖς γὰρ ἐοίκασι οἱ ἐξηγηταὶ τὰς ἐννοίας τῶν ἀρχαίων θηρᾶσθαι πειρώμενοι, ἄληπτος δέ ἐστιν ἐπειδὴ καὶ φυσικῶς καὶ ἠθικῶς καὶ θεολογικῶς καὶ ἁπλῶς πολλαχῶς ἐστὶν ἀκούειν τῶν αὐτοῦ, καθάπερ καὶ τῶν Ὁμήρου. δύο γὰρ αὗται ψυχαὶ λέγονται γενέσθαι παναρμόνιοι, διὸ παντοδαπῶς ἐστὶν ἀκούειν ἀμφοτέρων.
>
> And he also dissociated himself from the solemn dignity of the Pythagoreans—keeping the doors closed, and 'Himself said so'—by conducting himself more sociably towards everyone. Now when he had made many into his lovers and had benefited large numbers of them, he

21 Porph. *De phil.* fr. 304 Smith.

22 The image of doors is used as physical access to words and it belongs to the metaphor of the body parts (ears, lips or belly). Hecate closes the doors of her deep throat in order not to reveal what, for external conditions, cannot be prophesized (Porph. *De Phil.* 342.3 Smith, *ap*. Philop. *Op. Mundi* 4.20 p. 201.20 Reichardt = vol. II p. 445.1–2 Scholten). For some Neoplatonic interpretations of Aristotle's obscurity, see Gritti (2012) 62–64.

> dreamed as he was on the point of death that, having turned into a swan, he was moving from tree to tree, and in this way was causing extreme toil for the hunters. Simmias the Socratic interpreted this dream as follows: that Plato would be difficult to grasp for those succeeding him who wished to explain him: for the commentators who attempt to pursue the concepts of the ancients are like birdcatchers, and Plato is difficult to grasp since it is possible to interpret his words on the level of natural philosophy, ethics, or theology—in short, in many different senses—as is also the case with the [words] of Homer. For these two souls are said to have embraced every mode, which is why it is possible to take the words of both of them in all manner of ways.
>
> TRANSL. GRIFFIN (2015)

On the one hand, Plato opens the doors to everyone; on the other, he cannot be caught by the exegetes-hunters, because his thought is not fixed, but volatile like the Homeric 'winged words' and can be interpreted in various ways. Interestingly, Plato himself reckoned that a written book (*Phaedr*. 275c–e) has an unlucky destiny compared to oral debates; in our passage, Plato is therefore considered for his thought, which is as dialectical as an oral discussion.

To sum up, the significance of the door as a gap between a gnoseological status of ignorance and one of knowledge, and between the human ontology and the divine state, is connected with a selective idea of knowledge, typical of mystery rituals. Nevertheless, the idea of promoting a message addressed to the crowd, supported by the guidance of an exegete, recurs in some cases. The idea of an enlarged audience probably stems from or is influenced by Christian proselytism. In the so-called *Tübingen Theosophy*, for instance, a work datable to the end of the fifth century CE written by an unknown Christian author with a Neoplatonic cultural background,[23] the writer presents himself as a guide for a crowd (7 Erbse = *Prooem*. 2 Beatrice). The Christian message is universal even if it needs a good exegete, something of a teacher but also a Hierophant, who is able to lead his students toward the path of knowledge and truth.

Adyton and Adyta

Proceeding along our metaphorical path through temple areas, we can now enter the *sancta sanctorum*, the *adyton*. In keeping with this philosophical initiation process, Proclus described Plato's philosophy as a source of light and illumination capable of revealing the intellect that is concealed in superior

23 Tissi (2015).

natures. Plato is seen as a guide and a hierophant, who reveals divine mysteries and visions (ἐποπτεία) to special souls. From a historical perspective, this can be read as the return of Philosophy after a phase of hiding. Thanks to philosophers like Plotin, Porphyry, Iamblichus and Syrian (Proclus' teacher), who followed a mystagogical lifestyle, the sanctuary's *adyta* became the venue of mystagogical initiation.[24] Initiation into mysteries enlightens every place, creating the conditions for illuminations (*Theol. Plat.* 1.1, p. 6.7–15 S.-W.):

> (…) οὕτως δὲ σεμνῶς καὶ ἀπορρήτως ὑπ' αὐτοῦ τὴν πρώτην **ἐκλάμψασαν** οἷον ἁγίοις ἱεροῖς καὶ **τῶν ἀδύτων ἐντὸς** ἱδρυνθεῖσαν ἀσφαλῶς καὶ τοῖς πολλοῖς τῶν εἰσιόντων ἀγνοηθεῖσαν [ἀσφαλῶς], ἐν τακταῖς χρόνων περιόδοις ὑπὸ δή τινων ἱερέων ἀληθινῶν καὶ τὸν προσήκοντα τῇ μυσταγωγίᾳ βίον ἀνελομένων προελθεῖν μὲν ἐφ' ὅσον ἦν αὐτῇ δυνατόν, ἅπαντα δὲ **καταλάμψαι** τὸν τόπον καὶ πανταχοῦ <τὰς> τῶν θείων φασμάτων **ἐλλάμψεις** καταστήσασθαι.
>
> But I think that this <mystagogy> shone forth at first from him [namely: Plato] so venerably and arcanely, as if in sacred temples, and after having been safely established within their *adyta* and being unknown to many who entered into these holy places, and I think that in certain orderly periods of time through certain true priests who embraced a life corresponding to the tradition of such mystic concerns it proceeded as much as was possible for it and made the whole place splendid and made illuminations of divine spectacles ever visible.
>
> TRANSL. TAYLOR (1816), REVISED

The hidden space in sacred temples alludes to the goal of mystery initiation and works as a source of light, which illuminates people who strive for it in the appropriate manner.[25] Philosophers themselves are full of divine light

24 Concerning Proclus' role in philosophy a famous episode has been narrated by Marinus (*V. Procl.* 10, p. 13 37–44 Saffrey-Segonds) about the arrival of the philosopher at Athens. When he arrived to the Acropolis, the guardian of the temple of Athena was closing the doors, but as he saw Proclus, he told him: 'actually, if you had not come, I would have closed'. This phrase has for Marinus a symbolic meaning. See in this volume also van Opstall (chapter 1).

25 See also Procl. *Theol. Plat.* 2.11, p. 65.11–15 S.-W.: (…) καὶ ὡς θεός ἐστι θεῶν ἁπάντων, καὶ ὡς ἑνὰς ἑνάδων, καὶ ὡς τῶν ἀδύτων ἐπέκεινα τῶν πρώτων, καὶ ὡς πάσης σιγῆς ἀρρητότερον, καὶ ὡς πάσης ὑπάρξεως ἀγνωστότερον, ἅγιος ἐν ἁγίοις τοῖς νοητοῖς ἐναποκεκρυμμένος θεοῖς, 'and (we have to say that) he is the God of all Gods, and the Unity of all Unities, and beyond the inaccessible entities he is beyond the first ones and more ineffable than every silence, and more unknown than every essence, holy among the holies concealed in the intelligible Gods.'

and belong to a divine choir that is possessed by Bacchic ecstasy:[26] moreover, gods are invited to lead the philosophers towards Plato's altar (ἑστία) and divine contemplation (θεωρία).[27] The image of a domestic-religious altar is subsequently connected with the idea of the school as a family, a community of disciples who access the inner part of the house. However, the image of the *adyton* and its association with the divine is not unusual. It was adopted, for instance, by another Neoplatonist philosopher, Damascius (fifth and sixth century CE), who considered the Ineffable as the unintelligible *adyton* of the all, while names and concepts are placed before the sanctuary's threshold (*Princ.* 1.8.6–17 Westerink = 1.6–7 Ruelle).[28]

> Εἰ δὲ χρείαν αὐτοῦ τινα ἐπιζητοῦμεν, αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ πάντων ἀναγκαιοτάτη χρεία, τὸ ἐκεῖθεν **ὥσπερ ἐξ ἀδύτου πάντα προϊέναι**, ἔκ τε ἀπορρήτου καὶ τὸν ἀπόρρητον τρόπον (…). Εἰ δὲ αὐτὰ ταῦτα περὶ αὐτοῦ λέγοντες, ὅτι ἀπόρρητον, **ὅτι ἄδυτον τῶν πάντων**, ὅτι ἀπερινόητον, περιτρεπόμεθα τῷ λόγῳ, εἰδέναι χρὴ ὅτι ταῦτα ὀνόματά ἐστι καὶ ῥήματα τῶν ἡμετέρων ὠδίνων ὅσαι πολυπραγμονεῖν ἐκεῖνο τολμῶσιν, **ἐν προθύροις ἑστηκυιῶν τοῦ ἀδύτου**, καὶ οὐδὲν μὲν τῶν ἐκείνου ἐξαγγελουσῶν κτλ
>
> If we are in search of the function of this entity, this is the most useful and necessary of all functions, namely, that from that realm everything proceeds as from an inner shrine, but in an ineffable and secret manner (…). If in saying these things about it, that it is Ineffable, that it is the inner sanctuary of all things and that it cannot be conceived, we contradict ourselves in our argument, it is necessary to realize that these are names and thoughts that express our labor pains, which dare to meddle improperly [with the Ineffable], standing at the threshold of the inner sanctuary, but reporting nothing about what takes place there.
>
> TRANSL. AHBEL-RAPPE (2010)

The *adyton* is, once again, conceived as the inner and hidden part of the sanctuary, symbolising divine transcendence. Moreover, concerning the One, Damascius states: 'The One, being closer to the inconceivable principle, if it is allowed to speak in this manner, dwells as in the *adyton* of this silence' (*Princ.* 1.84.19–21 W. = 1.56.11–12 R.). Such linguistic considerations within a

26 For divination and divinatory language in Neoplatonism, see Addey (2014).

27 Procl. *Theol. Plat.* 1.1 p. 8.9–10 S.-W.

28 See also Dam. *Hist. phil.* fr. 2A Athanassiadi (*Epit. Phot.* 2 Zinzten), 34C.8 Athanassiadi (*Epit. Phot.* 35.1 Zintzen).

theological speech are indicative of a new mentality, in which silent prayers and ritual inner silence were required as a prelude to revelation: gradually, inner ritualism comes to replace exterior ritualism (Eus. *PE* 4.13, Porph. *VP* 19.18–19 des Places).[29]

To sum up, door(s) and vestibule(s) are akin to a prelude to the sanctuary's *adyton*, which, at a symbolic level, represents our inner temple and divine transcendence. If, according to Socrates, accessing the soul's doors means penetrating our own selves, then sanctuary doors are perceived even more clearly as a symbol of the division between the external side, accessible to everybody, and the inner side, the *adyta*, reachable only by the initiated few. Therefore, sanctuary vestibules and doors come to symbolise the spaces before the most divine space, the *adyton*, where the gnoseological, ethical and esthetical *akmé* (summit) is achieved.

Images of Doors

The Doors of the Soul and the Doors of Poetry

Neoplatonists did not use just the symbolism of doors mentioned above, but they also employed other metaphorical images such as 'the doors of the soul' and 'the doors of poetry'.

The first image, the 'doors of the soul', is very common. These doors are regarded as barriers preventing us from accessing the Truth. This is an old metaphor, already used by Sophocles (fr. 393 *TGF* IV Radt) and later by Himerius (*Or*. 31.33 Colonna). It was then re-employed by Christian authors who identified the doors of the soul with sense and perception (e.g. Ev. Pon. *Ad Eulogium* PG 79 col. 1113A).[30] However, for Neoplatonists, the 'doors of the soul' may be opened to receive the doctrine divinely inspired by Plato: thence the doors give access to the sanctuary's *adyton*, which is interpreted as divine mysteries. We also encounter the image of the inner door that the soul has to open to penetrate the divine *penetralia*. In the case of appropriate behaviour, knowledge

29 In this passage Porphyry considers the intellect as the temple of God (σοὶ δὲ, ὥσπερ εἴρηται, νεὼς μὲν ἔστω τοῦ θεοῦ ὁ ἐν σοὶ νοῦς). In Greek there is a pun on the words νεώς (temple) and νοῦς (intellect).

30 Among Christian authors, the door of the soul corresponds to the senses: Orig. *Fr. in Lamentationes* (GCS 6) Fr. 52.4, p. 252.26 Klostermann: πύλαι δὲ ψυχῆς αἱ αἰσθήσεις. However, there is no reference to senses in Gregory of Nyssa (*In Cant. cant*., t. IV p. 333.4–5 Langerbeck, a commentary on *Ps.* 23.7).

of God is followed by Union with God. In Proclus' prologue to the first book of his *Commentary on Parmenides*, this prayer is very meaningful (617.1.7 Cousin):

> Εὔχομαι τοῖς θεοῖς πᾶσι καὶ πάσαις ποδηγῆσαί μου τὸν νοῦν εἰς τὴν προκειμένην θεωρίαν, καὶ φῶς ἐν ἐμοὶ στιλπνὸν τῆς ἀληθείας ἀνάψαντας ἀναπλῶσαι τὴν ἐμὴν διάνοιαν ἐπ᾽αὐτὴν τὴν τῶν ὄντων ἐπιστήμην, **ἀνοῖξαί τε τὰς τῆς ψυχῆς τῆς ἐμῆς πύλας εἰς ὑποδοχὴν τῆς ἐνθέου τοῦ Πλάτωνος ὑφηγήσεως** κτλ.
>
> I pray all the gods and goddesses to guide my mind in this study that I have undertaken—to kindle in me a shining light of truth and enlarge my understanding for the genuine science of being; to open the gates of my soul to receive the inspired guidance of Plato, etc.
>
> TRANSL. MORROW AND DILLON (1987)

Proclus requests the gods to open the gates of his soul so that he may receive Plato's thought. Therefore, the expression 'ouvrir les portes de son âme est métaphorique et signifie simplement "ouvrir son âme" puisque, pour accéder au niveau divin, il faut justement fermer les sens par lesquels pourraient entrer les passions'.[31] The phrase 'gates of the soul' also occurs in Proclus' *Commentary on the First Alcibiades*. The discussion deals with the topic of knowledge as recollection[32] and the souls are regarded as the doors of truth (2.281, p. 321.10 Segonds). In a passage from Proclus' *Commentary on Timaeus* (2.243.3–7 Diehl), the νοῦς, which is indivisible, precedes the soul, which is divisible: the soul is compared to a straight line, the νοῦς is like a point; moreover, the soul can also be compared to a circle, with the νοῦς at its centre. Thus, the soul's λόγος is revealed as stemming from an inner *adyton* (ἐκεῖθεν γὰρ οἷον ἐξ ἀδύτου τινὸς ἀναφαίνεται ὁ τῆς ψυχῆς λόγος), which discloses the undivided part of the νοῦς and announces its secret and ineffable union. Likewise, Damascius considers the *adyton* of the soul as our inner refuge (*Princ.* 1.22.14–15 W. = 1.16.11 R. ff.), where we have to keep silent. Divine union (ἕνωσις) with the All derives from the soul's self-contemplation, which takes the form of an initiatory conversion (ἐπιστροφή); the soul turns towards itself and proceeds to its inner part; it enters its *adyton* and contemplates the classes of gods and the *henades* of what exists (Procl. *Theol. plat.* 1.3, p. 16.1–17 S.-W.). As Damascius states, intelligible forms make no sense to us since they are hidden in the sanctuary of the Father (*In Parm.* 965.10–16 Cousin).

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31 See Segonds-Luna (2007) 166 n. 5.

32 Segonds (1986) II 436 n. 5.

The second door image is that of poetry. Symbolic language, as mentioned above, involves a hidden meaning. Consequently, myths have a cryptic significance, since they arouse in talented listeners a desire to unveil their hidden message, prompting them to investigate the truth located in their inner sanctuary (*adyton*) which is unreachable by the βέβηλοι (Procl. *In Remp.* 1.85.26–86.10 Kroll) .[33] As Plato stated in *Phaedrus* 245a3–6, the 'mania of the Muses' is indispensable to access the door of poetry:[34]

> ὃς δ' ἂν ἄνευ μανίας Μουσῶν **ἐπὶ ποιητικὰς θύρας ἀφίκηται**, πεισθεὶς ὡς ἄρα ἐκ τέχνης ἱκανὸς ποιητὴς ἐσόμενος, ἀτελὴς αὐτός τε καὶ ἡ ποίησις ὑπὸ τῆς τῶν μαινομένων ἡ τοῦ σωφρονοῦντος ἠφανίσθη.
>
> While the man who arrives at the doors of poetry without madness from the Muses, persuaded that expertise will make him a good poet, both he and his poetry, the poetry of the sane, are eclipsed by that of the mad, imperfect and unfulfilled.
>
> TRANSL. ROWE (1986)

In a passage from the *Commentary on Republic*, Proclus refers to the same text: Homeric wisdom is produced by a 'crazy mouth' which is a necessary feature of the poet (1.140,16 Kroll). Moreover, in his *scholia* to the *Phaedrus*, the Neoplatonic philosopher Hermeias (fifth century CE) asserted that poets who have grown up with human arts may reach the doors of poetry, but only divine poets knock 'on the Muses' doors' (*In Plat. Phaedr. schol.* 99 p. 104.9–10 Lucarini-Moreschini, οἱ μέντοι ἔνθοι ποιηταὶ μονονουχὶ τὰς θύρας τῶν Μουσῶν ἀράττουσι). The image of the 'doors of poetry' was a traditional one[35] and can also be found, for instance, in a parodist text by Lucian. In his *Demosthenes' Encomium* (5.8), the poet Thersagoras admits that a certain amount of mania is required not only in the case of a person who wants to reach the doors of poetry, but also in the case of prose writers. Choricius (sixth century CE) adopted the same image to represent the initiatory stage in a paideutic training that envisages an epistemological ascent from Grammar to Poetry and Rhetoric. The case of his teacher, Procopius, is emblematic: as Choricius explains, he had already accessed the doors of poetry while his peers were still learning to write (*Or. Fun. Proc*. 5.1–7):

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33 Concerning Proclus' vision on poetry and myths, see Chlup (2012) 185 ss.

34 The passage is commented by Aristid. *Rhet*. 2.53–56 pp. 161.1–162.4 Behr, Stob. *Flor*. 2.5.2, Procl. *In Remp.* 1.57.26–29 Kroll, *Comm. in Dion. Thrac.* 316.13.

35 For an example in Pindar, see in this volume chapter 1 (van Opstall).

τοιγαροῦν **ἐπὶ μὲν θύρας ἦκε ποιητικὰς** ἡλικίαν ἔχων ἣν οἱ τὰ πρῶτα παιδευόμενοι γράμματα, εἰς Ἑρμοῦ δὲ παλαίστραν ἐφοίτησε χρόνον ἄγων τοσοῦτον ὅσον οἱ τὰ Μουσῶν ἔτι μανθάνοντες, βῆμα δὲ καὶ νέων χορὸς αὐτὸν διεδέξατο τοῖς τὰ ῥητόρων τελουμένοις ὁμήλικα, καὶ ἦν παράδοξον θέαμα καὶ τερπνὸν τοῖς μαθηταῖς ἡλικιώτης διδάσκαλος.

For that reason, he came to the 'poetic gates' being at that age during which children are being taught their first letters; and then, he went to the Palestra of Hermes being of the age of those who are still learning about (the curriculum) of the Muses. The rhetor's platform as well as the class of youths received him when he was the same age as those being initiated in rhetoric; and a teacher of the same age as the pupils was an unexpected and delightful sight.

TRANSL. LITSAS (1980)

Doors and Paideutic Training

Besides these two common images, vestibules, doors and *adyta* are significant from a didactic perspective. As Claudia Greco has observed,[36] the initiatory role of pedagogical training and the use of initiatory language in order to learn rhetoric do not belong only to an erudite performative *topos*, but also to a concrete sphere. Furthermore, the door image is introduced as a metaphor, in the paideutic journey, of an epistemological and didactic *anodos*.[37] As scholars have already shown, the ἐγκύκλιος παιδεία consisted in a pre-philosophical general culture followed by philosophical studies.[38] The study of Aristotle was considered propedeutic to access, using an Eleusinian image, the 'Greater Mysteries' of Plato. For instance, regarding the reading of Aristotle's work, Olympiodorus says we have to begin our education with 'the doors of the *Physics*' because it is in this work that the first principles are explained (Olymp. *In Aris. Meteora comm.* 2.2 Stüve). Neoplatonic philosophers believe that Platonic works too must be read in a precise order and, accordingly, conceive the *Alcibiades* as the 'fore-gates of the temple' (τὸν Ἀλκιβιάδην προπυλαίοις δεῖ ἀπεικάζειν) and the *Parmenides* as 'the temple's *adyton*' (ἀδύτοις

36 Greco (2010) 1443–1444 n. 5. For the image of the doors Greco cites also Chor. *Laud. Marc.* 2.7–8; *Or. Nupt. Zac.* 7, and for initiatory language associated with the learning of rhetoric, see GVI 1326.3–4 (epitaph of Didios Taxiarches) and Mich. Psell. *Or. Fun. Lich.* 391.19–20.

37 For the school in Late Antiquity see Donini (1982) and Watts (2006); concerning Alexandria, see Haas (1997), Watts (2010) and Gaffino (2014).

38 For this *cursus*, see Hoffmann (2014) 350–351.

δὲ τὸν Παρμενίδην, Olymp. *In Alc.* 11.5–6 Westerink).[39] This pattern was also employed in the context of textual exegesis: Wisdom is concealed in the *adyton* of Truth, which is expressed in Myth (Dam. *Hist. phil.* fr. 2A Athanassiadi = *Epit. Phot.* 2 Zintzen). The use of the door image for paideutic training should probably be read not only as a metaphor, but also as referring to the existence of a genuine door as an architectural element in schools and, by metonymy, to the school itself. The canon established for the Platonic dialogues, derived from the order in which they were read, mirrors the same progression and elevation of the disciple who must begin his personal development with a simple dialogue in order to reach the peaks of epistemology and ethics.[40] In fact, in Olympiodorus' view, it is necessary to start from ourselves before approaching the reading, for only after inquiring into ourselves can we turn to the investigation of other things. The reading of Plato's work, moreover, must begin, as we have said, with the *Alcibiades*, which is compared to propylaeum, and end with the *Parmenides*, which represents the inner part of the knowledge sanctuary (*In Alc.* 11.3–6 Westerink):

> ἄλλως τε δεῖ νομίζειν ὅτι προπυλαίοις ἔοικεν οὗτος ὁ διάλογος, καὶ ὥσπερ ἐκεῖνα τῶν ἀδύτων προηγοῦνται οὕτω καὶ τὸν Ἀλκιβιάδην προπυλαίοις δεῖ ἀπεικάζειν, ἀδύτοις δὲ τὸν Παρμενίδην.
>
> Also, one should consider that this dialogue is similar to the fore-gates [of temples], and just as those [fore-gates] lead on to the Holy of Holies, so one should liken the *Alcibiades* to the fore-gates, and the *Parmenides* to the Holy of Holies.
>
> TRANSL. GRIFFIN (2015)

Therefore, the soul has to approach Platonic texts as an initiate who is accessing mystery cults.[41] Penetrating the *adyta* means that we have reached our elevated level of education and knowledge.

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39 Chapter 26 of the *Prolegomena to Platonic philosophy*, a scholarly handbook wrongly attributed to Olympiodorus, presents a similar subdivision of Plato's work: the *Alcibiades* is the dialogue from which the reading of Platonic works must start.

40 Motta (2014) 63 ff.

41 See also Procl. *In Eucl.* 141 Friedlein.

Conclusions

To conclude, this short study sheds light on the symbolic value of the image of the door in Neoplatonic philosophical texts from Late Antiquity, and attempts to reconstruct the history of a specific cultural mindset. Starting from the door's initiatory and eschatological significance, we observed that this symbol has also been employed in images such as the door of the soul or the door of poetry. Neoplatonists adapted these traditional connotations to a philosophical context, along with the metaphors of thresholds and *adyta*. In particular, we highlighted the use of this imagery as developed by Proclus on the basis of Plato's texts, namely, the notion of Beauty, Truth and Proportion as the antechamber that must be crossed before penetrating into the *adyton* of the Good. Moreover, the door is associated with a paideutic *cursus* and the door images are used in poetic and philosophical contexts. We also remarked that an enlarged audience came to replace a selected public of initiates, probably under the influence of universal Christian thought. The use of this universal symbol in Christian thought is explored in more detail in the remainder of this volume. Interdisciplinary research on the meaning of sanctuary doors in different cultures will contribute to achieve a deeper understanding of this symbol in other eras of history. I shall conclude my study by quoting a passage from Iamblichus, who associated the door symbol with a eudemonistic relation (*Myst.* 10.5.21–35):

> Αὕτη μὲν οὖν νοείσθω σοι <ἡ> πρώτη τῆς εὐδαιμονίας ὁδός, νοερὰν ἔχουσα τῆς θείας ἑνώσεως ἀποπλήρωσιν τῶν ψυχῶν· **ἡ δ' ἱερατικὴ καὶ θεουργικὴ τῆς εὐδαιμονίας δόσις καλεῖται μὲν θύρα πρὸς θεὸν τὸν δημιουργὸν τῶν ὅλων, ἢ τόπος ἢ αὐλὴ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ**· δύναμιν δ' ἔχει πρώτην μὲν ἁγνείαν τῆς ψυχῆς πολὺ τελειοτέραν τῆς τοῦ σώματος ἁγνείας, ἔπειτα κατάρτυσιν τῆς διανοίας εἰς μετουσίαν καὶ θέαν τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ καὶ τῶν ἐναντίων πάντων ἀπαλλαγήν, μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα πρὸς τοὺς τῶν ἀγαθῶν δοτῆρας θεοὺς ἕνωσιν.
>
> Know, then, that this is the first road to well-being, having for souls the intellectual plenitude of divine union. But the sacred and theurgic gift of well-being is called the gateway to the creator of all things, or the place or courtyard of the good. In the first place, it has the power to purify the soul, far more perfect than (the power) to purify the body; afterwards, it prepares the mind for the participation in and vision of the Good, and for a release from everything which opposes it; and, at the last, for a union with the gods who are the givers of all things good.
>
> TRANSL. CLARKE, DILLON AND HERSHBELL (2004)

The essence of well-being consists in the knowledge of the Good, and the knowledge of the Evil in the Good's oblivion, the Good being divine, Evil human. In other words, happiness (εὐδαιμονία) coincides with knowledge (ἐπιστήμη). Being a gift, this gateway leads to a better condition in terms of purification, participation in and vision of the Good; it prepares the mind for a release from everything which is in opposition to the Good and, lastly, for union with the gods. Iamblichus' predecessor, Plotinus, describes a man approaching the Divine as someone who penetrates the inner sanctuary, leaving the temple statues behind him (*Enn.* 6.9.11,16–22). He concludes his magnificent work with a dramatic final sentence (*Enn*. 6.9.11,49–51):

> Καὶ οὗτος θεῶν καὶ ἀνθρώπων θείων καὶ εὐδαιμόνων βίος, ἀπαλλαγὴ τῶν ἄλλων τῶν τῇδε, βίος ἀνήδονος τῶν τῇδε, φυγὴ μόνου πρὸς μόνον.
>
> This is the life of gods and of godlike and blessed men, deliverance from the things of the world, a life, which takes no delight in the things of this world, escape in solitude to the solitary.
>
> TRANSL. ARMSTRONG

This 'escape in solitude to the solitary', also occurring in Numenius (fr. 2 des Places (11 Leemans) 11–12: ὁμιλῆσαι τῷ ἀγαθῷ μόνῳ μόνον), refers to the solitary condition of human beings, who are alone throughout their life, and is also connected to Apollo's famous maxim on the temple of Delphi, γνῶθι σεαυτόν. Such a solipsistic concept was assimilated by an erudite Christian author, Augustine; in one of his most memorable passages, he wrote: 'Noli foras ire, in teipsum redi; in interiore homine habitat veritas; et si tuam naturam mutabilem inveneris, transcende et teipsum' ('Do not get out of yourself, but return to yourself; the truth lives in the inner man and, if you find your nature unstable, you should transcend yourself too', *De vera rel.* 39.72). The idea of a solitary self-conversion that takes place by entering one's inner sanctuary indicates a new approach to religion and more generally a new spiritual attitude, which started to develop in Late Antiquity and then flowed into modern thought. Suffice it to quote Blaise Pascal (seventeenth century CE) and his reflection on the human condition. In one of his *Pensées*, which will I quote here to conclude this investigation, Pascal stated: 'Il faut se connaître soi-même: quand cela ne servirait pas à trouver le vrai, cela au moins sert à régler sa vie, et il n'y a rien de plus juste' (*Pensées* 66).[42]

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42 This paper was copy-edited by Nic Mira.

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CHAPTER 6

The Paradise of Saint Peter's

Sible L. de Blaauw

For Wolfgang Speyer

'... in atrium, ... quod vocatur Paradiso'.[1] In this Italian-like Latin phrase, the Roman *Liber Pontificalis* describes the forecourt of St Peter's basilica. This mid-eighth century reference is the earliest testimony to the 'atrium called the Paradise' being used as a proper name for the courtyard in front of the Vatican Basilica. The expression is intriguing since it refers to a typical feature of Early Christian architecture with a metaphor that suggests a specific kind of experience including a range of spiritual associations. In this contribution, the possible connections between St Peter's atrium and the notion of 'paradise' will be examined.

The atrium is one of the most fascinating architectural phenomena of Early Christian church-building. Scholars have always underlined the 'classical' nature of this colonnaded forecourt and have emphasized that representative imperial architecture—and so the classical architectural legacy—survives in church buildings quite specifically in the atrium.[2] This observation may be justified as far as sheer form is concerned but it tends to underexpose the innovative features of church atria. The public colonnaded courtyards in antiquity were usually enclosed squares that surrounded one or more main buildings on all sides. On the other hand, in Roman private homes the spaces, called *atrium*, were internal courtyards that gave access to various adjacent spaces. The church atrium is, in its disposition and in its architectural and functional effect, most decidedly different. It is focussed exclusively on the main entrance of one building. Its purpose is obviously to prepare the visitor for entering the interior of the main building. As is known, the concentration on the interior fundamentally distinguishes Christian places of worship from most pagan temples. Entering a church is considered a significant act. Several secular / profane basilicas also had colonnaded forecourts, but these were rarely arranged in an axial or exclusive way towards the main entrance of the basilica. Entering these buildings was clearly less loaded with meaningful connotations.

1 *LP* 95.6.

2 For example Schneider (1950).

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In the case of churches, the courtyard with colonnaded porticoes on all its sides is called in the earliest sources an *atrium*, *quadriporticus* or τετραστόων.[3] It is usually arranged against the façade of the church, generally corresponding to this in width. The whole lay-out expresses an unequivocal axial relationship, that guides the visitor from the street, across the forecourt to the central portal of the church and from there further to the altar inside. This marked longitudinal axial relationship even occurs in centralized churches, and thus demonstrates it to be an essential feature of church design.

In this light, it may not be too hazardous to call the Early Christian church atrium 'Erlebnisarchitektur'. It would seem to have had the aim of producing a visual, and consequently an emotional and or spiritual effect in its users. Nevertheless, since it was never a generally employed feature of Early Christian church building, it can be considered to be in the domain of supplementary elements to church planning. In some regions it does not occur at all. The atrium was attractive because of its potential to enrich the exterior beauty of a church and its urbanistic effect, and also to assist in a spiritual stage setting for a visit to a church. One could, however, always refrain from these desirable attributes. They were probably most desired for cathedrals and important memorial churches. When present the atria of smaller churches are likely to be reduced variants of more important prototypes. The atrium of Old St Peter's is one of the best-documented church atria in the West. It was, after all, part of the most important church of Western Christendom.

The first section of this paper describes St Peter's atrium and its fountain based on an analysis of the sources. This is followed by a scrutiny of all the features that may have contributed to the perception of the atrium as paradise. These contributing factors appear to be more numerous than the iconography of the church façade, which is highlighted as such by Charles Picard (1971). They reinforce each other in a coherent mise-en-scène of a paradisiacal association.

The Architecture of St Peter's *Quadriporticus*

In the sixteenth century the atrium of the Vatican basilica had become the most prominent monument of its kind left in Rome. Alterations and additions over the course of time had clearly produced a rather disorderly grouping of structures. There was no more than a shadow left of the noble symmetry of colonnaded porticoes that might be supposed to have been the original layout.

3 For a more ample discussion of the church atrium and for bibliographical references to earlier studies, see: de Blaauw (2008) 353–359; de Blaauw (2011).

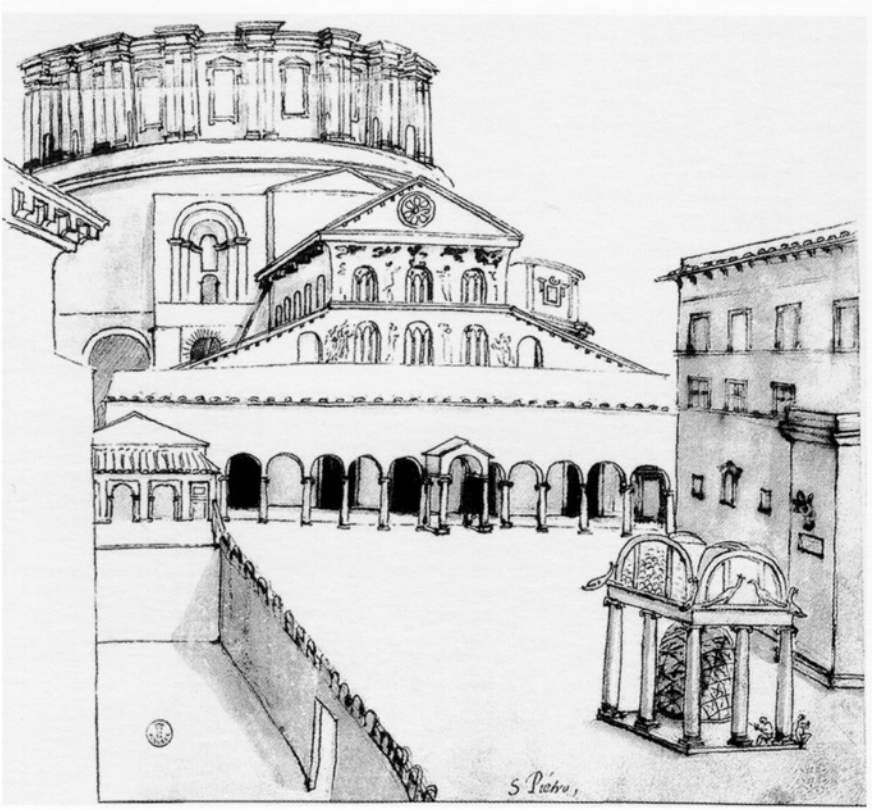


FIGURE 6.1 *Rome, St Peter's, Constantinian nave and atrium, and new basilica under construction, seen from the East. G.A. Dosio, drawing, 1575 ca.*
SOURCE: FORMERLY: UFFIZI UA 2555, FIRENZE (NOW LOST).

It was, however, not difficult to detect its initial contours. In the sixteenth century drawings of the atrium facing towards the façade of the basilica, the axial courtyard in front of the main church doorways, with a fountain in its centre, is still clearly recognizable (fig. 6.1). The curial palace to the right and the chain of heterogeneous buildings to the left were encroachments in the later fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

The historical importance of this tormented building was not ignored during the Early Modern period. Thanks to one author, Tiberio Alfarano cleric of St Peter in the 1540's, we know a lot more about St Peter's atrium than the accidental graphic evidence and the scattered written notes conveyed. His Latin description of the old basilica has become a crucial source for every student of Old St Peter's. Alfarano dedicated an extensive chapter to the

atrium.[4] Apart from a detailed description in the text, his famous ground plan includes a restoration of the forecourt and surrounding buildings. It demonstrates that in his time it was possible to read the extant remains in the light of a supposed original form.

A synthesis of all written, archaeological and graphic data was published by Richard Krautheimer and his collaborators in the fifth volume of the *Corpus Basilicarum Christianarum Romae* (1977).[5] The following brief sketch of the atrium's original layout is based on their reconstruction.[6]

The basilica on the site of the apostle's tomb was built on an artificial platform, 240 meters in length including the atrium. This configuration suggests that the atrium had been conceived as an integral part of the original project. Recent alternative dating proposals notwithstanding, the most plausible model is still that of emperor Constantine the Great as the founder of the basilica and patron of its construction.[7] This implies that the building works started and made substantial progress during his reign over Rome (312–337), not ignoring the fact that is was completed under that of his son Constantius II (350–361). It is possible that the building of the aboveground structures of the atrium, the porticoes and the gatehouse lasted somewhat longer, but it must have been finished long before the end of the century.

The atrium was slightly elongated in shape (fig. 6.2). Its width corresponded to the perimeter walls of the basilica. As a matter of fact, its total size equalled that of the entire nave of the basilica. The forecourt including the porticoes, with an overall length of 91 meters, constituted a vast architectural complex. A huge flight of stairs on the east side compensated for the different ground levels outside and the platform. Written sources call it a *quadriporticus*, suggesting a court enclosed by four porticoes, but also use the term *atrium*.[8] The western portico of the *quadriporticus* was the entrance hall to the five doorways of the basilica, three leading into the central nave, two into the inner southern and northern aisles respectively. The eastern wing comprised the main entrance from the city into the basilica. This unit was drastically altered in the course of the centuries, so that it is not certain if a monumental gatehouse was part of the original fabric. Such a building, containing three

4 Alfarano (1914) 108–128.

5 CBCR 5 (1977) 261–271, 277, 279.

6 Cf. the first systematic analysis of the atrium by Picard (1974); in addition: Arbeiter (1988) 186–191.

7 For the debate, see Liverani (2015).

8 de Blaauw (2011) 33–35.

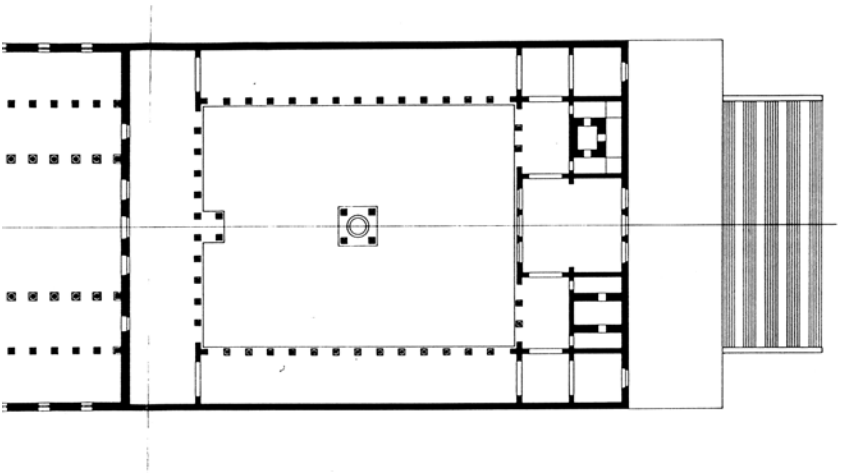


FIGURE 6.2 *Rome, St Peter's, ground plan of atrium as of 500 / 1300 ca. Hypothetical reconstruction by Thomas Barth 1986, after* CBCR *5 (1977).*

generous doorways, existed in the Early Middle Ages and survived until the demolition of the complex in 1610.

The completion of the atrium before 400 CE is implied in a letter written by Paulinus of Nola. He gives an account of a large-scale funeral banquet, thrown by the senator Pammachius in memory of his deceased wife Paula in 396.[9] The number of invited poor people exceeded the capacity of the gigantic church and atrium, so that the lower square in front was also filled with crowds. Paulinus actually mentions all the main features of St Peter's atrium known in later centuries: the steps (*grades*) leading from the lower square (*campus*) to the level of the atrium, the landing in front of the gates, an entrance hall or *vestibulum*, the court or *atrium*, a central fountain called the *cantharus*, under

9 Paulinus Nolanus, *Ep.* 13.11–13 in: *Opera* 1 (1999) 92–95, spec. 94–95: [13] '… nitens atrium, fusa vestibulo est, ubi cantharum ministra manibus et oribus nostris fluenta ructantem fastigatus solido aere tholus ornat et inumbrat, non sine mystica specie quattuor columnis salientes aquas ambiens. Decet enim ingressum ecclesiae talis ornatus, ut quod intus mysterio salutari geritur spectabili pro foribus opere signetur. Nam et nostri corporis templum quadriiugo stabilimento una evangelii fides sustinet et, cum ex eo gratia, qua renascimur, fluat et in eo Christus, quo vivimus, reveletur, profecto nobis in quattuor vitae columnas illic aquae salientis in vitam aeternam fons nascitur nosque ab interno rigat et feruet in nobis, si tamen possimus dicere vel sentire mereamur habere nos cor ardens in via, quod Christo nobiscum inambulante flammatur.'

a bronze baldachin supported by four columns and finally the bluish-green sparkling façade of the basilica.

One additional late antique building campaign seems to have brought St Peter's atrium to its perfection. While residing in the Vatican due to a schism, pope Symmachus (498–514) ordered a comprehensive renovation of the complex in front of the basilica. It is the first and most extensive refurbishment of the forecourt that is described in the *Liber Pontificalis*.[10] The text refers to a decoration in the atrium with marble and mosaics, to a complete 'enclosure' of the atrium (*atrium omnem conpaginavit*), to a rearrangement and extension of the steps in- and outside the atrium and to the building of residential quarters or reception rooms (*episcopia*) adjacent to the atrium. The text is not clear enough to allow for a precise interpretation, of whether the *quadriporticus ad cantharum* was enriched with marbles and mosaics or the fountain itself.[11] The renewal of the steps also indicates that the marble paving of the area was involved. This feature comes back when a later *LP-vita* mentions that pope Donus (676–678) had the 'upper atrium, which is in front of St Peter's church inside the four porticoes' paved with large marble slabs.[12] We will return to the consequences of Symmachus' important campaign in the following sections.

Throughout the Middle Ages, the atrium fulfilled various functions in addition to its basic use by those entering and leaving the basilica. Faithful and

10 *LP* 53.7: 'Ad cantharum beati Petri cum quadriporticum ex opere marmoribus ornavit et ex musivo agnos et cruces et palmas ornavit. Ipsum vero atrium omnem conpaginavit; grados vero ante fores basilicae beati Petri ampliavit et alios grados sub tigno dextra levaque construxit. Item episcopia in eodem loco dextra levaque fecit. Item sub grados in atrio alium cantharum foris in campo posuit et usum necessitatis humanae fecit.' Translation Davis (2000) 47: 'At St Peter's fountain with the square colonnade he provided marble adornments, including mosaic, lambs, crosses, and palms. He completely enclosed the actual atrium; outside the doors of St Peter's he widened the steps, he built other steps under the awning on right and left, and there he also built episcopal rooms on right and left. He also set up by the steps to the atrium another fountain outside in the open, and he built a convenience for people to use when needed.' Clearly, some ambiguous clauses in the Latin text may call for alternative translations. Van den Hoek and Herrmann (2013) 21, suggest: 'he embellished the area around the cantharus of Saint Peter with a quadruple porch made out of marble and he adorned it with lambs and crosses and palms made of mosaic.'

11 *Compaginare* possibly refers to a complete marble revetment of the porticoes, since the general introduction of this paragraph in the *LP* is: 'Basilicam vero beati Petri marmoribus ornavit.'

12 *LP* 80.1: 'Hic atrium beati Petri apostoli superiore, qui est ante ecclesiam in quadriporticum, magnis marmoribus stravit.'

visitors of all walks of life crossed the atrium or stayed in it, with devotional, worshipful, political or touristic intentions. It had important liturgical and ceremonial functions and was also used for burials and economic activities by vendors of souvenirs and other service providers for the pilgrims.[13]

The *Cantharus* and the Mosaics

Two elements contributed conspicuously to the atrium's character and splendour in the first centuries of its life. Paulinus mentions both of them: the *cantharus* and the decoration of the basilica's façade. Moreover, both were the object of renovation and amelioration relatively soon after the first testimonies to their presence.

A fountain in the centre of the forecourt was obviously, from the very start of public church building, a standard element in the appointments of an ideal Early Christian basilica. Eusebius mentions the 'symbols of sacred purifications' placed in the courtyard: 'fountains with copious streams of flowing water, supply cleansing to those who are advancing within the sacred precincts.'[14] His words are in reference to the cathedral of Tyre, built immediately after Constantine's recognition of the Christian church in 313.[15] Paulinus describes the fountain of St Peter's as an aedicule consisting of four columns and a metal roof: 'a cupola (*tholus*) topped with solid brass adorns and shades a *cantharus*, which belches forth streams of water serving our hands and faces. Not without secret meaning does it surround the waterspouts with four columns'.[16] In both cases the actual cleansing function for those entering the church is mentioned.

It seems that the fourth-century installation survived as the main body of the central fountain until 1610 CE. Its definite shape and appointments, as documented by drawings and descriptions from the last 150 years of its existence, was the product of late antique or early medieval additions.[17] The aedicule had then eight instead of four columns, all of porphyry. Its canopy had a lunette, filled with bronze grills, at each side (fig. 6.3). These were adorned with two bronze peacocks on the east side and four bronze dolphins by way of gargoyles at each corner. The lower half of the *intercolumnia* was

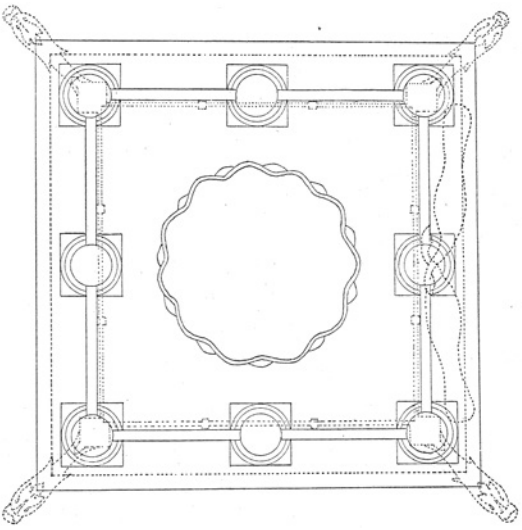
13 de Blaauw (1994) 755 and *passim* (cf. index, pp. 885–886).

14 Eus. *HE* 10.4.40, translation Oulton (1932) 423.

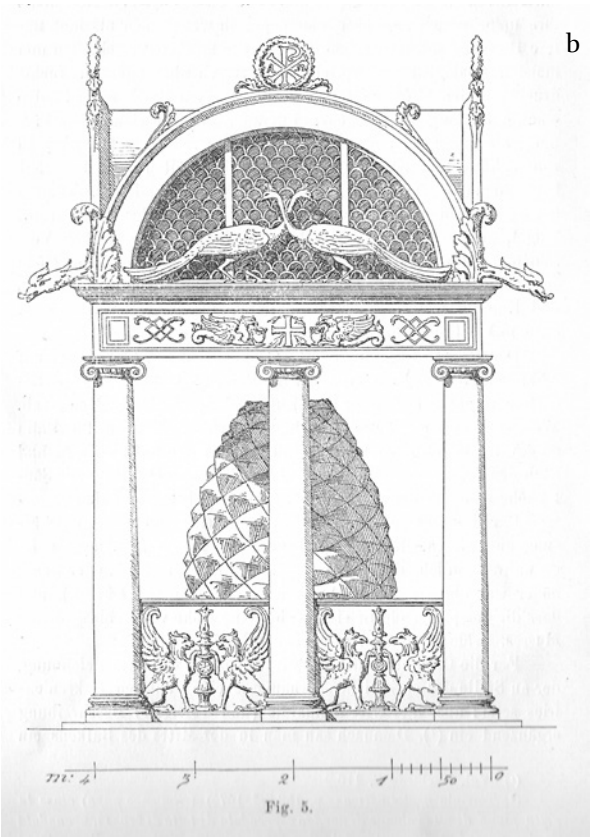
15 de Blaauw (2011) 36–38.

16 Paulinus Nolanus, *Ep.* 13.13: see above note 9. Translation Van den Hoek and Herrmann (2013) 11.

17 Huelsen (1904); Liverani (1986).



a



b

FIGURE 6.3A–B
Rome, St Peter's, cantharus *with* pigna (*pinecone*). *Reconstruction of plan and elevation by C. Huelsen (1904).*

filled with massive marble screens decorated with reliefs showing gryphons. A big bronze pinecone occupied the space inside this cage-like structure almost entirely. What tended to be simply called the *pigna*, was a rather fantastic ensemble, without doubt assembled from ancient spoils, and in Dale Kinney's words a 'fabulous concoction'.[18] The fountain was not very big—about four meters square—but it caught the eye thanks to its central placing and its fine materials.

The dating of the various stages in the development of the fountain structure remains unresolved. Symmachus' restoration 'of St Peter's *cantharus* with the *quadriporticus*' included 'marble adornments, including 'lambs, crosses, and palms in mosaic'.[19] The ambiguous syntax of the sentence leaves the reader with the impression that the marbles and mosaics were exclusively provided for the fountain, but it is also possible, that they included the four colonnades. Nevertheless, we know that mosaics did not feature in the adornment of the fountain in later phases of its existence, but they are well-attested in the medieval entrance halls of Roman churches.[20] This mosaic adornment of the narthices most probably recalls an earlier Roman tradition.

The only well documented restoration is that undertaken by pope Stephen II (752–757), who 'renewed eight marble sculpted columns of wondrous beauty in the *atrium* called the *quadriporticus*, in front of the doors of St Peter's; which he placed over a square and he set up a bronze covering above'.[21] The wording suggests a thorough refurbishment of the existing fountain structure.[22] The number of eight beautiful—porphyry—columns instead of the original four obviously is the most striking characteristic of the building campaign, and indeed this made the *cantharus* of St Peter's unique. Two of these columns were originally adorned with sculptured heads of emperors. A square base made from marble blocks may have been renewed under Stephen, this being due to an intermediate raising of the pavement level in the central space of

18 Kinney (2005) 32.

19 *LP* 53.7: see above note 10.

20 E.g. the Lateran Basilica (twelfth-century) and S. Lorenzo fuori le mura (thirteenth-century). Remarkably, the thirteenth-century renewal of the narthex of St Peter's included a painted frieze with a cycle from the lives of Peter and Paul.

21 *LP* 94.52: 'Interea renovavit in atrium ante fores beati Petri apostoli, qui quadriporticos dicitur, columnas marmoreas 8, mirae pulchritudinis, sculptas, quae desuper quadris composuit et aereum desuper conlocavit tegumen.' I prefer one aspect in the translation of van den Hoek and Herrmann (2013) 46 n. 124 over Davis (1992) 76, and give my own variant here.

22 For the description I base myself on the analysis by Huelsen (1904).

the atrium.[23] Actually, the proportions of the aedicule as visible on the later drawings suggest that the surrounding floor was lifted after the fourth century. The structure seems awkwardly sunken in the pavement.

The white marble architraves still visible on the sixteenth century drawings may be 'spoils' applied during Stephen's restoration, but it remains possible that they were reused from the earlier stage. Apart from classical ornamentation they showed a Greek cross with four lambs between opposing gryphons.[24] The central motif may be the result of a reworking of the original pieces. If the tiny leaf ornament was that of palms, as suggested by Huelsen,[25] the lintels contain the lambs, crosses, and palms as mentioned in Symmachus' *vita*. They are so small in scale however, that it is hardly imaginable that the author of that *vita* would have highlighted them if they had been restricted to the fountain lintels. I suspect in Symmachus' time they were scattered conspicuously over the whole atrium, including the colonnades. Therefore, my preferred interpretation of the *Liber Pontificalis* passage is: 'he beautified the *quadriporticus* where the *cantharus* is located with marbles, and added a mosaic decoration of lambs and crosses and palms'.[26]

The roof with its characteristic lunette-shaped arches is claimed, by the explicit wording of Stephen's *vita*, to be a result of the eighth-century renovation. However, the bronze sculptures and ornaments mounted on the roof are not referred to in the *Liber Pontificalis* paragraph, which appears to be aiming at precision. This may imply that the peacocks, the dolphins and even the Christian crowning element of the roof arches—a chrismon in a laurel wreath—were reused pieces from the preceding situation.[27]

The most impressive piece was the *pigna* itself, still preserved in the Vatican Museums (fig. 6.4). Like the peacocks, the bronze cone is of unmistakably ancient origin, and was once intended to be used as fountain gushing water.[28] Remarkably enough, it is not mentioned in Stephen's renovation programme.[29] A later date for its transfer to St Peter's is not plausible, in view of the fact that the pinecone, measuring more than three meters in height, was hermetically

23 This question is discussed without definite conclusions in CBCR 5 (1977) 270–271.

24 Finch (1991) 23 and 26 n. 83 on the slightly contradictory sources.

25 Huelsen (1904) 101.

26 Cf. an almost contemporary case in which the entablatures of the atrium colonnades were decorated with mosaics: see below, note 51.

27 All the metal elements are listed in an inventory made during the demolition in 1610, see Liverani (1994) 30.

28 Huelsen (1904) 102; Angelucci (1986).

29 The first explicit reference dates only from the twelfth century, see Liverani (1986) 54.



FIGURE 6.4 Pigna (*pinecone*) *from St Peter's atrium, bronze, h. ca. 3,70 m. Vatican Museums, Cortile della Pigna.*

enclosed in Stephen's 'cage'. It could, therefore, have been an older part of the *cantharus*. It will have continued to serve as a fountain, standing as it was in a square catch basin constituted by the pedestal of the columns, and since the time of Stephen II also shaped by the beautiful gryphon plaques that filled the eight *intercolumnia*.[30] A system of pipes provided water to spurt from numerous original spouts in the upper part of the conical fountainhead, so that it continued to function as it was intended in antiquity.[31] Still later in the Carolingian period an ancient aqueduct was restored in order to guarantee water supply for the *cantharus*.[32]

On the other hand: it is not plausible that Paulinus missed the rhetorical opportunity to mention the remarkable pinecone if it was standing there in his time. Van den Hoek and Herrmann therefore have sound arguments to suppose a real *cantharus*-like central object of the fountain in the first period.[33] Just such an elegant marble vase with two high vertical handles is still preserved in the forecourt of S. Cecilia in Trastevere and perhaps also in Cimitile. This type of vase or crater furnishes the best explanation for the origin of *cantharus* as a general term for the atrium water fountain.

Paulinus was, even then, struck by a colourful decoration of St Peter's upper façade. He must have meant the tall east wall of the Constantinian nave, clearly visible to those approaching the basilica from the usual route along the Mausoleum of Hadrian. It rose high above the entrance wing of the atrium and was observable from nearby in the courtyard itself. Under pope Leo I (440–461) the huge wall surface pierced by two rows of three large round-headed windows was adorned with an extensive figurative mosaic, donated by the aristocratic couple Marinianus and Anastasia.[34] The extent to which the fifth century iconography was altered during a restoration of the façade under Sergius I (687–701) is still debated.[35] Nevertheless the sources demonstrate a certain

30 I suspect that the plaques were added to provide for a water pool on a higher level than the original basin, which was almost buried under the raised pavement of the courtyard.

31 Huelsen (1904) 112–113; Angelucci (1986).

32 *LP* 97.81.

33 Van den Hoek and Herrmann (2000) 197–203; Van den Hoek and Herrmann (2013) 43–47.

34 ICUR 2 (1888) 55 no. 10.

35 *LP* 86.11: 'Hic musibum quod ex parte in fronte atrii eiusdem basilicae fuerat dirutum innovavit. Similiter et specula eiusdem ecclesiae, tam quae super sedem vel regias argenteas maiores sunt renovavit.' Translation Davis (2000) 88: 'He renewed the mosaic which had been partly destroyed on the front of the atrium of the basilica. He also renewed the windowpanes of the basilica, both those above the throne and those above the silver main doors.' Usually linked to the upper façade, the alternative reading may regard the mosaic of the exterior atrium front, i.e. of the gatehouse, whereas a substitution



FIGURE 6.5
The funerals of Gregory the Great in the atrium of St Peter's. Codex of Farfa, John the Deacon, Vita Gregorii Magni, Eton College Ms. S.11, fol. 122r. BY KIND PERMISSION OF ETON COLLEGE, WINDSOR.

consistency regarding the iconography of the mosaic until its renovation in the thirteenth century (fig. 6.5).[36] It allows for a reconstruction of the Lamb of God in the upper gable, Christ between the four winged Living Creatures

of the windowpanes in the upper façade does not automatically include a restoration of the windows themselves.

36 Picard (1971) 174–181; Wisskirchen (2003) with different conclusions regarding a more drastic interference by Sergius I; Romano (2012) 113–115 (*K. Queijo); Liverani (2008) on a representation of emperor Constantine in the façade mosaic.

symbolizing the evangelists in the zone underneath the gable cornice,[37] the human figures of the evangelists between the upper row of windows and the Twenty-four Elders between the lower windows. Probably a procession of lambs moving to a central Lamb from the cities of Jerusalem and Bethlehem constituted the lower register of the entire composition directly above the lean-to roof of the narthex.[38] The only elements likely to have been radically renewed under Gregory IX (1227–1241) are Christ and the Four Creatures, since this zone was provided with a typical high medieval *cavetto*. However, the ancient iconography was carefully maintained with the exception of a standing Christ which was substituted for a high medieval Christ enthroned with Peter and Mary. There is no reason to see the upper Lamb as an addition effectuated in the supposed restoration of Sergius I.[39] It is completely consistent with the theophanic and apocalyptic character of the representation, which breathes a pronounced Early Christian spirit.

The *cantharus* and the tall shimmering façade mosaic, together with the colonnades on either side of the inner courtyard, the marble paving and wall revetments, the five monumental portals of the basilica with silver plated door leaves in the central doorway (at least from 625–638), must have bestowed the atrium an air of preciousness and delicate harmony that cannot have escaped the perception of any visitor.

Reflections of Paradise

The Name Paradisus

In a thorough article Jean-Charles Picard has analysed all the available testimonies of the name *Paradisus* in regard to St Peter's atrium.[40] His conclusions can confidently be summarized as a solid base for further research. The word emerges as a toponym for the forecourt of St Peter's in eighth century Roman sources, apparently as a result of spontaneous popular usage. One century later, in the Rome-oriented Carolingian Empire, the term is imitated and generalized to indicate the atrium of a church, all be it, in the known cases, of

37 Mentioned in an eighth century sylloge in relationship to the fifth century inscription of Marinianus: *ubi iii animalia circa Christum sunt picta*, ICUR 2 (1888) 55 no. 10.

38 This position may explain why this element is missing from Taselli's drawing (ca. 1611), CBCR 5 (1977) 230 fig. 212, but is mentioned in Grimaldi's contemporary description, see Grimaldi (1972) 163–164.

39 I agree with O' Carragáin (2005) 247–254.

40 Picard (1971).

important and monumental abbeys. The French word *parvis* for the front steps of a church is a result is this dissemination. Yet the origins are clearly in the Vatican basilica, and in Rome itself *paradiso* remained a specific designation for the atrium of Old St Peter's until its demolition.[41]

As early as 1937 Ernst Schlee made a useful attempt to specify the possible associations of St Peter's forecourt with the Garden of Eden, the terrestrial paradise.[42] Glancing over the definition by Isidore of Seville (ca 560–636) in his *Etymologiae*, one realizes that the location of the paradise in the east and the presence, in the centre, of a fountain provide interesting similarities to St Peter's.[43] On the other hand, the character of a real garden richly planted with trees of all sorts, seems to be missing in the church atrium. Clearly, the question which kind of paradise could be inferred by the toponym *paradisus* requires further discussion. We will address crucial aspects briefly.

Orientation

The Vatican basilica has its façade directed towards the east, the direction of approach from the city. Façade orientation is a typical, but not absolute, feature of the first phase of public Christian church building.[44] Even if practical reasons determined the choice of the eastern position of either the façade or the apse—in both cases the liturgy at the altar would be celebrated toward the east—there was, even in this early, experimental phase, a symbolical legitimation provided for the position of the main entrance at the east side of the church. In his panegyric for the dedication of the new cathedral in Tyre (Lebanon) around 315 CE, the church historian Eusebius integrates the East entrance and atrium of that basilica into his reading of the building as a symbol of the heavenly Jerusalem and as a reflection of the biblical Temple of earthly Jerusalem.[45] It is not necessary to think that the designers of the first generation of public churches, in either Tyre or Rome, intended to produce

41 Some rare examples attest to the dissemination of the term in Rome for other atria in the High Middle Ages, e.g. the Lateran Basilica, see de Blaauw (1994) 300.

42 Schlee (1937) 133–146; cf. Picard (1971) 172–173.

43 Isidore of Seville (1982–1983) 2 (1983) 166 (*Etymologiae* 14.3.2–3): 'Paradisus est locus in orientis partibus constitutus, cuius vocabularum ex Graeco in Latinum vertitur hortus: porro Hebraice Eden dicitur, quod in nostra lingua deliciae interpretatur. Quod utrumque iunctum facit hortum deliciarum; est enim omni genere ligni et pomiferarum arborum consitus, habens etiam et lignum vitae: non ibi frigus, non aestus, sed perpetua aeris temperies. E cuius medio fons prorumpens totum nemus inrigat, dividiturque in quattuor nascentia flumina.'

44 de Blaauw (2012) 22–23.

45 de Blaauw (2011) 35–37.

architectural iconology. Yet, the effect was telling and meaningful: the morning light entered through the atrium and the basilica doorways into the nave. In that way, St Peter's atrium contributed significantly to the spatial experience the church orientation on both a cosmic and symbolic axis. A vibrant sense of direction towards the rays of the rising sun will have filled every visitor to the atrium in the morning hours. For not a few amongst them, their ancient, non-Christian sensibilities will have reverberated in this experience. Not without reason did pope Leo the Great in a 451 CE sermon reproach the churchgoers who, upon entering the atrium, could not resist the old pagan custom of turning to the sun and bowing to it.[46] Yet, the vision of Ezekiel provided a biblical antecedent for this cosmological experience in which the eastern position of the atrium played an important role.[47]

The biblical notion of the location of the paradise in the East was well rooted in ancient Christian literature. It was unquestionably part of the repertoire of meaning regarding the Christian tradition of cosmical orientation in worship and hence in church building.[48] It could be associated both with the apse in the east, and with the entrance of the church in the case of a western disposition of the apse.[49] The eastern atrium of St Peter's was not exceptional in Rome in its disposition, but it was unique in its generous dimensions, its visibility from afar and ultimately also in its proliferation as a prototype for other churches in medieval Europe. The inscriptions once on view in the atrium made abundant use of the metaphor of light.[50] All this may have contributed to the atrium as a potential breeding-ground for a cosmological allusion to paradise.

Architectural Delight

The generally austere exterior aspect of Early Christian churches was sometimes graced by a remarkably monumental atrium. Taken altogether, the atrium was the most elaborate exterior element of Early Christian churches. The few contemporary sources regarding St Peter's *quadriporticus* and its scant remains still standing in Early Modern times evoke harmonious architecture,

46 Leo Magnus, *Sermo* 27.4, ed. Chavasse (1973) 135–136.

47 'And he brought me into the inner court of the LORD's house, and, behold, at the door of the temple of the LORD, between the porch and the altar, were about five and twenty men, with their backs toward the temple of the LORD, and their faces toward the east; and they worshipped the sun toward the east.' (Ezekiel 8:16, translation King James 2000 version).

48 Wallraff (2001) 79–81.

49 de Blaauw (2012) 30–37.

50 ICUR 2 (1888) 53–54 no 3–5.

rich decorations and precious materials. From Eusebius' description of the forecourt in Tyre emerges a similar impression of architectural splendour. The atrium demonstrates that the house of God was expected to have a dignified aspect, even if its significance was clearly focussed on the interior, where the congregation would gather in the celebration of liturgy.

The closest point of reference for St Peter's is the only systematic building programme of an atrium in Rome reported in the *Liber Pontificalis*. This concerns the courtyard between the Lateran baptistery and the newly built oratorium of the Holy Cross adjacent to it (under pope Hilarus 461–468). The evocative description of this *triporticus* and *nymphaeum* accounts of colonnades with marble columns of various rare types and colours, of two fountains with striated shells and porphyry columns and of a central fountain in a porphyry basin with a striped shell, all pouring water. Bronze railings seem to enclose the central fountain, and the colonnades are all decorated with mosaics.[51] This passage is not only extraordinary in its explicit description of an atrium-like courtyard, the term *nymphaeum* with its pagan connotations also surprises in the context of the papal baptistery.[52] The dry enumeration of elements and materials manages to produce a highly suggestive image of a—maybe tiny—courtyard full of harmony, colour, brilliance and sophisticated water effects. Even if this was not a regular church atrium, and its waterworks were probably associated with the living water of the baptistery itself, it was a place of entrance and passage to sacred buildings. As such, it cannot have failed to have been a source of inspiration for Hilarus' indirect successor Symmachus, some forty years later in St Peter's. The emphasis on rich materials, mosaic decoration and fountains recurs in Symmachus' Vatican restoration project. One of the various poetical inscriptions placed in St Peter's atrium recalled Symmachus' restoration by calling on those who cross the thresholds

51 *LP* 48.04: '… nympheum et triporticum ante oratorium sanctae Crucis, ubi sunt columnae mirae magnitudinis quae dicuntur exatonpentaicas, et concas striatas duas cum columnas purphyreticas raiatas aqua fundentes; et in medio lacum purphyreticum cum conca raiata in medio aquam fundentem, circumdatam a dextris vel sinistris in medio cancellis aereis et columnis cum fastigiis et epistuliis, undique ornatum ex musibo et columnis aquitanicis et tripolitis et purphyreticis.' Translation Davis (2000) 40–41: 'In front of the oratory of the Holy Cross, a fountain and a triple porch, where there are the columns of marvellous size called hecatonpentaic, and 2 striated shells, with striped porphyry columns, pouring water; and in the middle a porphyry basin with a striped shell pouring water in the middle, surrounded right, left and centre by bronze railings and columns with pediments and entablatures, decorated on all sides with mosaics and with Aquitanian, Tripolitan, and porphyry columns.'

52 On the Christian rejection of the *nymphaeum*, see Speyer (2015) 20–29.

of the basilica (*limina templi*) to admire the beauty of the various works in the atrium that were brought about by the pope.[53]

The most telling parallel outside Rome is the interior courtyard between the two basilicas and the tomb of Felix in Paulinus' complex at Cimitile (Nola). As with its Roman counterparts, this atrium has disappeared almost completely, but its commissioner Paulinus (353–431) has described it in poetic words. This same author demonstrated his sensibility for the beauty of St Peter's atrium in its earliest stage. The 'inner courtyard' in the church complex in Cimitile was 'open to the light with bright facades and wreathed below by snowy columns and excelled by a lavish display of the central *cantharus* and little marble fountains adorned with sculptures'. The visitors might 'rest against the parapets' of the porticoes to admire the beauty of the waterworks.[54] Clearly there is a long tradition of associating church atria with the experience of architectural splendour. Consequently the Vatican canon Giacomo Grimaldi, eyewitness of Old St Peter's demolition, explains the toponym *paradisus* to be the result of that atrium's particular beauty.[55] Architecture could evoke the sensation of delight, and 'delight' was the meaning of the Hebrew word for Eden.

Iconography and Iconology

The mosaics of the church façade undoubtedly set the tone for the iconography of the atrium in the light of the book of Apocalypse. The vision of the heavenly liturgy as described in Revelation 4–5 was the theme that confronted every visitor to the basilica crossing the atrium. From the eighth century they were even prepared for this visual experience. When approaching the outer gates of the forecourt, a smaller mosaic showing the heavenly vision of Christ enthroned in a *mandorla* surrounded by angels and four crown-bringing martyrs could be seen on the exterior front wall above the passage to the courtyard.[56] Motifs from the book of Revelation were not unusual for Early Christian church façades in the West, even when only one other known example—in Ravenna—may be dated into the fifth century.[57] Picard explains the notion of Paradise for the atrium specifically through the iconographical programme of the façade and the serious interest in the book of Revelation shown in Early Medieval

53 ICUR 2 (1888) 53–54 no 5. Cf. De Santis (2007) 376.

54 Paulinus Nolanus, *Carm.* 28.28–52 in *Opera* 2 (1999) 292–293; cf. Lehmann (2004) 225–227; Kiely (2004) 459–460.

55 Grimaldi (1972) 166.

56 Belting (1961).

57 Wisskirchen (2003) 477–482.

Rome and in the Frankish Empire.[58] Yet more links can be established in an earlier age.

Paulinus of Nola in the earliest literary testimony regarding St Peter's atrium puts an allegorical interpretation on the central fountain. In his eyes, the four columns of the *cantharus*—'not without secret meaning'—symbolize the four evangelists.[59] Early Christian authors frequently expounded a metaphorical relationship between the four rivers in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2.10–14) and the four evangelists.[60] This imagery linking the four Gospels, streaming water, and the earthly and heavenly paradise is firmly rooted in fourth century theology. Paulinus' association of the streaming fountain with the four evangelists is therefore nothing less than obvious. These notions connect the fountain in a literary sense to the rivers of paradise, and make in metaphoric way a reference to the four gospels. One wonders whether the remarkable double presence of the four evangelists in the fifth century mosaic of the church façade, was a conscious response to the symbolism already inherent to the fountain. Another element of direct interaction between the mosaic and the *cantharus* may be the representation of the four rivers of Paradise in the apocalyptical setting of the façade. Even if we have no proof of it regarding St Peter's, the four rivers were already part of the imagery of the Lamb of God in the fifth century.[61]

In its individual elements the fountain also contains an array of paradisiacal associations. If it had originally a vase-like *cantharus*, it would provide a visual relationship to iconographical settings referring to paradise, with the *cantharus* as a source of living water. This is seen in Early Christian sarcophagi and mosaic floors in baptisteries and churches.[62] Often, the *cantharus* is combined with peacocks, typical attributes of paradise-imagery and obviously symbols of eternal life.[63] A symmetrical pair of peacocks, standing opposite from each other, is an iconographical motif that occurs in the combination, as mentioned, with a crater, the chrismon or a cross symbol, but also on the roof of an aedicule in the Rabbula codex.[64] Obviously, the late eleventh century artist, painting a miniature showing an abridged impression of

58 Picard (1971) esp. 182–183.

59 Paulinus Nolanus, *Ep.* 13.13 (see above, note 9).

60 E.g. Ambrosius, *De Paradiso* 3.12–24 (1984) 52–66.

61 E.g. in Paulinus' apse mosaic in Cimitile, see Lehmann (2004) 166–167; *Lexikon* 3 (1971) 7–9 and 382–383.

62 E.g. Herakleia Lynkestis (narthex floor); Stobi and Butrint (baptisteries); sarcophagi in Sant' Apollinare in Classe Ravenna. Most examples seem to date from the sixth century.

63 *Lexikon* 3 (1971) 409–410.

64 Rabbula Gospels (Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, cod. Plut. 1, 56), fol. 1b: Theotokos under canopy.

St Peter's atrium had this visual formula in mind. He moved the characteristic peacocks from the fountain to the basilica's roof and—intentionally or not—in this way testifies to the perception of the atrium as dominated by the thematic interchange between the fountain and the apocalyptic scenery of the façade (see fig. 6.5).

A similar meaningful effect was created by the impressive bronze pinecone when it was added to the fountain-installation. It may simply have been located at this prominent place because of its rarity and beauty. But, it can also be said that the century-old universal association of the pinecone-motif with renewal of life and rebirth strengthened extraordinarily well the notions of paradise existent in the idyllic reality and the eschatological perspective of the atrium.[65] Interestingly, its appearance in thematic relationship with the apocalyptic vision of the façade mosaic is confirmed by one of the medieval imitations of St Peter's *pigna*, the Ottonian bronze pinecone of the Palace Chapel in Aachen (fig. 6.6). Dating from about 1000 CE, a period of intense Rome-reception in the German empire, this bronze artefact is clearly directly inspired by the Roman model.[66] Reduced to less than one third of the prototype's measurements, and of less refined execution, it is more explicit than the prototype in its reference to the rivers of paradise, integrated as river personifications at the four corners of the cone's base. What was implicit in the Roman setting, received direct visual expression in its northern translation: the pinecone was the central water fountain of the Garden of Eden, from which the four rivers flow away.

Other motifs of the atrium's decoration may have created the sense of an enclosed garden. The palms mentioned in Symmachus' programme of refurbishment, whatever the actual state of their realization in mosaic, were probably referring to the biblical antecedent of palm decorations in Ezekiel's vision of the temple.[67] In Scripture, the palm is associated with the Garden of Eden, but also with the courts of the Lord.[68] More generally, the palm belongs to the same paradisiacal repertoire as the lambs and the peacocks.[69] In Paulinus' description of his own inner atrium in Cimitile, he adopts the rhetorical imagery

65 On the significance of the pinecone, see Finch (1991).

66 Brandt and Eggebrecht (1993) 2, 115–118. I am less sceptical about the link to St Peter's than some recent authors.

67 Ezekiel 40.31, King James Bible: 'And the arches thereof were toward the utter court; and palm trees were upon the posts thereof: and the going up to it had eight steps.'

68 Psalm 92 (91): 12–13 King James Bible 'The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God.'

69 Mühlenkamp and Enß (2015) 845–848.



FIGURE 6.6 *Bronze pinecone, h. 0,9 m., ca. 1000. Aachen, Hohe Domkirche.*

of a garden.[70] Even if there are no natural plants, the courtyard has the paradisiacal attributes of a perfect garden. The courtyard of the Great Mosque in Damascus with its vegetal ornamentation in mosaic and its fountain still gives an impression of this kind of garden evocation.

The spiritual experience evoked in the atrium that may have overwhelmed the sensible visitor to St Peter's probably found a visual expression in a number of Carolingian liturgical manuscripts. In particular, the Gospel book from

70 Paulinus Nolanus, *Carmen* 27.483–489; 28.266–278 in *Opera* 2 (1999) 283–284 / 303; Lehmann (2004) 196–167 and 233–234; cf. Kiely (2004) 455–460. I think Kiely tends to exaggerate the garden reference in Paulinus' description.

St Médard in Soissons dating from the early ninth century is important, because it contains two full page miniatures showing two subjects that occur as dominant features of St Peter's atrium, the fountain and the façade mosaic (fig. 6.7). The combination of images of the Adoration of the Lamb and the Fountain of Life in one manuscript is unique, and it is not at all usual to have an apocalyptic scene in a gospel book.[71] The Fountain of Life is the name given to a representation in some Carolingian and Eastern manuscripts that is interpreted as the biblical 'living waters' in a paradisiacal setting. As such, scholars associate the *tholos*-like structure with baptism and with the sepulchre of Christ, alluding to the theologically connected ideas of cleansing, death and resurrection.[72] The connotation of the fountain with paradise is obvious, and is based on Scripture as well as on the teachings of the church fathers. The Bible itself provides reasons to link the waters of the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2.10–14) with the eschatological paradise in the Book of Revelation (Revelation 22.1–2). The Soissons manuscript (ca 820–827) depicts the fountain as an aedicule on eight columns, crowned with a cupula and a cross. Deer and birds encircle the basin, in a paradisiacal landscape. Its older counterpart, the Fountain of Life in the Godescalc Gospel book (781–783) shows the Fountain of Life in the same guise, but now given marble screens between the columns and a pair of gorgeous peacocks facing each other on the roof (fig. 6.8).[73] The unique apocalyptic scene in the codex of Soissons shows a transparent colonnade with an architectural background, supporting a frieze with four creatures symbolizing the evangelists. Above it, and more to the rear, rises a panel showing the Adoration of the Lamb by the Twenty-four Elders. Several features are so specific for St Peter's that I have no hesitation to suppose a pictorial prototype that was directly based on Roman experience. The fact that the *pigna* is missing is well understandable for iconographical or historical reasons and does not detract from the exceptional value of these representations.[74] They demonstrate what a Frankish visitor of the eighth century experienced as he entered the forecourt of the Vatican basilica. Moreover, they underline the substrate of paradisiacal and eschatological connotations in its stage-setting.

71 Underwood (1950) 67–68.

72 Underwood (1950) 43–47. See Shilling and Stephenson (2016).

73 Cf. Schutz (2004) 379.

74 Theoretically, the pictorial prototype may date from before the addition of the bronze pinecone. Intentions of iconographical abbreviation are, to my view, still more plausible. The same iconographical autonomy may account for the number of eight columns. Even if they may reflect the odd number of columns of the Roman fountain, the symbolism of the number eight and octagonal structures is likely to have been more important.



FIGURE 6.7 *Adoration of the Lamb, Gospelbook from St Médard in Soissons, ca. 825, Bibliothèque Nationale Paris, Ms. Lat. 8850 fol. 1v.*
PHOTO: CENTRE FOR ART HISTORICAL DOCUMENTATION, RADBOUD UNIVERSITY.



FIGURE 6.8 *Fountain of Life, Godescalc Gospels, 781/783, Bibliothèque Nationale Paris, Ms nouv. acq. Lat. 1203, fol. 3v.*
PHOTO: CENTRE FOR ART HISTORICAL DOCUMENTATION, RADBOUD UNIVERSITY.

In Conclusion

The goal of most users passing through the atrium was to visit the tomb of the apostle Peter. The forecourt actually prepared the visitor and pilgrim spiritually for his or her meeting with St Peter. Picard's reference to the façade mosaic as the main reason for the toponym *paradisus* was too narrow in the sense that a two-dimensional vision of a paradisiacal future is not enough to account for the spiritual reflex of the visitors. It was the spatial experience of the atrium, the interaction between architectural harmony, light, orientation, aquatic display, idyllic decorations and iconographical evocations that made this generous courtyard into the Christian paradise of late antique and early medieval Rome.

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Abbreviations

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CHAPTER 7

Imagining the Entrance to the Afterlife

Peter as the Gatekeeper of Heaven in Early Christianity

Roald Dijkstra

Heaven as a space that Christians can reach after death is one of the essential concepts of the Christian faith. Unsurprisingly, therefore, debate about its meaning and nature has been abundant from the very beginnings of Christianity onwards.[1] One aspect of this debate was that of the entrance towards heaven, the transition from the profane to the sacred. A few remarks in the canonical, and thus widely accepted, writings of the New Testament was at the basis of the early Christian vision on this entrance to heaven and the person(s) in charge at the gate. Whereas many genres in prose (sermons, treatises, apologetics) were closely connected to the sphere of theological discussion, the fields of poetry and the visual arts where in general more loosely bound by theological restrictions. These media, therefore, seem particularly promising as sources through which the development of the Christian imagination of the entrance to the afterlife can be explored. The apostle Peter is a key figure in Christian conceptions of this entrance.

Christian Concepts of Heaven in Context

Naturally, Christian ideas about heaven were influenced by and similar to concepts of other religions and cultures in which Christianity originated. A common concept of heaven in Antiquity, e.g., was its conception as the dwelling of God; as such, heaven was conceived of as a temple or royal court.[2]

Another concept was the idea of a barrier between earth and heaven. Often this barrier was represented as a river in Antiquity.[3] Apart from rivers and other possible obstacles on the way towards heavenly places, there was the common

1 See e.g. Russell (1997) 40–100, cf. LThK 5, s.v. Himmel III (Kehl) and Bockmuehl (2013).

2 Wright (2000) 190. See e.g. Amos 9.6.

3 See e.g. Graf (2004): according to him, the idea of a bridge crossing a river did not appear in Christian literature before the late sixth century (p. 22). However, earlier apocryphal texts do refer to rivers to be crossed in order to reach the supernatural realm, e.g. in the Apocalypse of Paul (long Latin version) 23.1. The complicated structure of heaven in this text is explained

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idea (both within and outside Christianity) of closed doors or gates that were entered or could be opened by heroes and (semi-)gods only. Similarly mythical individuals denied entrance to those who are not permitted to go further. Sometimes heaven was entered by force, sometimes by the fulfilment of certain tasks. These elements were frequently made explicit in the iconography of funerary monuments.[4] A famous pagan example is the Velletri sarcophagus from the mid-second century, on which this motif is combined with an extraordinary abundant repertoire of doors and arches.[5] The idea of guarding the entrance of heaven was certainly not unique for classical culture. A similar situation is found in one of the first chapters of the Old Testament, where a cherub and a sword guard the earthly paradise after Adam and Eve were driven out (Gen. 3.24).

In some traditions, heaven is also the place of the reception of the faithful after death. In that interpretation of heaven the possibility to close the place to those who are not among the faithful is crucial. As such, the entrance to heaven is thought to be marked by gates in early Judaism and early Christianity, following older, Egyptian and Mesopotamian traditions.[6]

In conformity with traditions such as those mentioned above, the mainstream Christian Church held that access to heaven was not self-evident (cf. Matt. 7.13–14) and that (the Christian) heaven was guarded. A door to the kingdom of heaven is mentioned by Christ in the gospels (see Matt. 25.10 and Luke 13.24–25). Heaven was thus often imagined as a physical space.

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among others in Carozzi (1994), who also provides text and translation of two versions of this text.

4 Cf. e.g. the figures of Cerberus, Hercules and Mercury, which were also depicted on pagan Roman sarcophagi: Platt (2011) and (2012) 219 and 223. On the left short side of the Velletri sarcophagus (see following note) Hercules is depicted with Cerberus. Cf. also RAC s.v. Himmel A II 4 (Lumpe/Bietenhard) and Goffredo (2017).

5 See e.g. Thomas (2011) 403–408 and Haarløv (1977) 26–27, as well as the entire section of id. 13–56 for more examples.

6 See Wright (2000) 117–214 on the Jewish and (very) early Christian traditions regarding heaven. Cf. id. p. 188: 'The Jews of the Greco-Roman period had, based on Genesis 11 and 28, ample biblical warrant to imagine that the heavenly realm could be accessed through gates.' The most salient example is given in 3 Baruch, for which see id. 164–174. Wright does not discuss the text of Matthew 16.18–19 nor does he discuss the role of gatekeepers of heaven in detail. For the gatekeeper in the Jewish tradition, see Pietri (1976) 1454. In this tradition, gates and gatekeepers are sometimes confused: Marcus (1988) 445.

The gatekeeper responsible for guarding this place was assumed to be a man: the apostle Peter.[7] He possesses the keys of heaven (Matt. 16.19), a detail that either presupposes the existence of heavenly gates or could itself be the more or less logical consequence of the metaphor of heavenly gates: since heaven was considered to be a physical space, tangible, real objects (viz. keys) were needed to enter it.[8] Although this passage is generally considered metaphorical in modern theology, the metaphor has often been blurred with a more material view on the matter.[9]

However, early Christian exegetes of the relevant passage—Matt. 16.19—interpreted the passage in various ways. This diversity is likely to have had some influence on culture and society, but at the same time sources from outside the strictly theological sphere can throw some light on the question how the passage was read and interpreted. More specifically, they may explain how Peter's function as gatekeeper was actually perceived in early Christian culture at large. In what way was the metaphor developed and how was it interpreted, or to put it differently: which lock fitted Peter's keys?

Clearly, Christianity consisted of a considerable number of different traditions, which all had their own ideas about the nature and characteristics of heaven. There is abundant apocryphal literature available in which visions of heaven are described. In some cases, the seer went straight into heaven, without noticing any noteworthy boundary (e.g. Peter in the *Apocalypse of Peter*), but in other instances mention is made of one or more heavens and an equal number of gates (e.g. the *Apocalypse of Paul* or the *Ascension of Isaiah*). In these texts, gatekeepers other than Christ or Peter are present, whose nature often remains rather vague.[10] This idea does not seem to be consistent with the

7 Certainly, Christ is presented as the gatekeeper of heaven in John 10.7–10 and Rev. 3.8. In Rev. 1.18 it is said that God has the keys of the kingdom of death. Angels are also described as gatekeepers of heaven, see e.g. Firmicus Maternus *err.* 24.5. Nevertheless, the idea of Peter as a gatekeeper, based upon the generally accepted and widely read gospel of Matthew, was prevailing. Christ is not presented with keys in early Christian art or poetry.

8 See e.g. Marcus (1988) 446: the reference to the keys may also have influenced the image of the gates of hell in Matt. 16.18. Clearly, heavenly doors with keys are not an original Christian invention, see e.g. Parmenides D4.14 (referred to by Segal (1980) 1344).

9 For modern interpretations, see e.g. Talbert (2010) 195–197; Frankemölle (1997) 223–224; Limbeck (1986) 210–16 (cf. p. 265); Beare (1981) 355; Nee (1978) 194–196. The amount of commentaries on Matthew in general and this passage in particular is overwhelming. I refer here to a rather random selection of commentaries.

10 For the gatekeepers in de Ascension of Isaiah, see Pesthy 201–202. In the *Apocalypse of Paul* (Latin version) so-called *potestates* judge entering souls, see Carozzi (1994) 81–92.

idea of one entrance to one Christian heaven, which is the core of the traditions on Peter (or Christ) as the gatekeeper of heaven.

Apart from the apocryphal texts mentioned, regrettably little cultural remains of groups framed as heretical by the main Church have survived, especially from the poetical or visual realm, and their impact on later Christian traditions was limited. The texts of a strongly mystic and allegorical nature in particular, in which the most extensive descriptions of heaven can be found, were not as widely read as many other Christian writings.[11] Their influence on art and poetry, therefore, has been minimal. These media—or what remains of it—were mostly produced by and for Christians who adhered to the dogmas of the main Church and were inspired primarily by the sanctioned writings of the Bible.

Heaven and Its Keys in Early Christian Exegesis

In order to investigate the more creative responses to the Christian concept of the entrance of heaven, the main text that could incite these and the responses to it must first be treated more fully. Matthew 16.18–19 was and is the crucial biblical passage in which the concept of Peter's function as the guard of heaven originates:

> 18. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. 19. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.[12]

Exactly how this was to be imagined becomes clearer in later exegetes, such as Tertullian. In his *Scorpiace* (10.6 and 10.8), he touches on some of the main issues concerning the representation of the entrance to heaven:

Gates of heaven are also mentioned in 4 Esra 6.1. Cf. also RAC s.v. Himmel B I e (Lumpe/Bietenhard) on *Himmelpforte*.

11 Apocryphal stories on Biblical figures, such as the martyrdom of Peter and Paul or the conflict between Peter and Simon Magus, were certainly known and often much appreciated in the mainstream Church, although knowledge of them seems to have been often based on oral tradition in particular.

12 Throughout this paper, translations from the Bible are taken from the New International Version, quoted from biblegateway.com.

> 6. Christiano caelum ante patet quam uia; quia nulla uia in caelum, nisi cui patet caelum; quod qui attigerit, intrabit. Quas mihi potestates ianitrices adfirmas iuxta Romanam superstitionem, Barnum[13] quendam et Forculum et Limentinum? Quas a cancellis ordinas potestates? (…) 8. Nam etsi adhuc clausum putas caelum, memento claues eius hic dominum Petro et per eum ecclesiae reliquisse, quas hic unusquisque interrogatus atque confessus feret secum. Sed asseuerat diabolus illic confitendum, ut suadeat hic negandum. Pulchra uidelicet documenta praemittam, bonas mecum claues feram, timorem eorum, qui solum corpus occidunt, animae autem nihil faciunt (…).[14]
>
> For a Christian, heaven lies open earlier than the way towards it, since there is no route to heaven, unless for someone to whom heaven lies open, and since whoever has reached it, will enter. Which powers do you mention as doorkeepers according to Roman superstition? Some Barnus and Forculus and Limentinus? Which powers do you place at the fences? (…) You still assume that heaven is closed, but remember that the Lord has left its keys here for Peter, and through him for the Church! Whoever is interrogated and has confessed here, bears them with him. But the devil asserts that you should confess there, in order to persuade you to deny here. Surely, excellent proofs would I send ahead then, the right keys I would carry, that is: the fear for those who kill the body alone, but do nothing against the soul (…).

Tertullian argues here against the heretic Valentinians. Earlier, he wrote an entire treatise refuting the principles of the Valentinians in 206–207 (*Adversus Valentinianos*), in which Peter is not mentioned. They claimed, so we are told, that martyrdom was needed in heaven, but not on earth. In *Scorpiace* 6, Tertullian refers to the fact that doors and gates were already part of the religious realm in classical antiquity: he mentions several pagan gods who guarded doorways, even if these gods are only known from Christian sources and the god of gates par excellence—Janus—is not mentioned. In the passage between the two I quoted here, Tertullian adds two Old Testament references

13 *Barnus* is named only here, see TLL s.v. 2. Barnus. Alternative readings include *Carnum* and *Ianum*. Azzali Bernardelli (1990) 279–280 argues for *Carnam*.

14 Text: Reifferscheid and Wissowa (1951). The translation is my own. The text is dated 211/12, see Döpp and Geerlings (2002) 670.

to the doors of heaven.[15] For Tertullian the idea of heavenly gates protected by Peter is thus anchored in both pagan and Jewish tradition.

Tertullian sketches an idea of heaven with several elements that refer to a physical place: notably the keys and the fences (*cancelli*), but also the *via* that leads to the gate and the *ianitrices* that guard it.[16] The place was closed (*clausum*), but via Peter orthodox Christians who dare to confess Christ on earth have the keys to unlock it.[17] The image of a physical place is merged with a more metaphorical reading, since the faithful are said to carry the keys with them. In an ironical way, Tertullian comes back to it with the words *bonas … claues*.

Tertullian was of course not the only Church father to comment on Matt. 16.18–19. Some ancient commentators stressed that since the kingdom of heaven was equal to the divine law, the keys offered access to that law and as such were considered keys of wisdom (cf. Luke 11.52).[18] Others added further material details to the passage in their exegesis. For instance, the material of the keys was discussed by Zeno (bishop of Verona in 360–380). He considered the keys a symbol of the remission of sins, and used another metaphor, gold, to describe them.[19] The reason for this may lie in the symbolical meaning that was attributed to the metal: gold was sometimes considered a symbol of the spirit of Scripture and wisdom.[20]

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15 Ps 24.7 (= Ps 24.9) and Amos 9.6. Elsewhere, Tertullian states that the only way to enter heaven directly, before the end of times, is to die as a martyr: *Tota paradisi clauis tuus sanguis est* (*De anima* 55.5, discussed in Bähnk (2001), e.g. on 226–227. Cf. for another symbolic interpretation of the keys also 55.4, where a *romphaea ianitrix* is mentioned.

16 In modern literature, opinions differ on whether this paradise is in heaven or on earth, but most commentators agree that it is in heaven, see Bähnk (2001) 200 (note 449) and Bockmuehl (2013). Note also the contrast between earth and heaven which is central to this passage and that of the *Scorpiace* as a whole. Azzali Bernardelli (1990) 279 points to the fact that orthodox Christians did not know an itinerary to heaven in contrast with the Gnostics, cf. e.g. 3 Baruch 2.1–7, discussed in Wright (2000) 165–166.

17 A similar interpretation can be found in Origen, who was followed by several others, see Pietri (1976) 1449. Origen also assigned every heresy a gate in hell and every virtue a gate in heaven, but these aspects of his interpretation were barely followed. According to Tyconius, who himself suffered excommunication from the heretic Donatists, the keys were only given to true Christians, see ibid. In general, keys were a symbol of power in classical antiquity, cf. TLL s.v. *clavis* and RE 568.

18 Marcus (1988) 49–55; for early Christian exegesis in this direction, see Pietri (1976) 1454–1455.

19 He does not mention Peter in his little treatise, which is *Tractatus* 2.40. *Tractatus* 2.30–44 is a series of treatises on baptism.

20 See RAC s.v. Gold B.II.2e (Horn).

Those who held Peter in high esteem emphasised his particular role in the history of the apostolic tradition. Cyprian (third century) interpreted the keys as a symbol of the unity of the Church. All bishops received the keys of heaven from Peter. Sometimes other apostles are considered to have received the keys too (cf. Matt. 18.18), but Peter had an exemplary role.[21] For many commentators Peter was the symbol of all Christians and as a consequence the Roman episcopate held a primary position.[22]

A modern current in the interpretation of the passage connects Matthew 16.19 to Isaiah 22.22: 'I will place on his shoulder the key to the house of David; what he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open.' This verse is part of a prophecy on the housekeeper of the palace named Shebna, to whom it is announced that he will be replaced by Eliakim (Isa. 22.15–25).[23] In antiquity, Isaiah 22.22 is also linked to the gate of heaven, but indirectly: i.e. via Revelation 3.7, where the keys of the house of David are connected to Christ.[24]

Both because of the importance of heaven and afterlife and the role of Matthew 16.18–19 in discussions about the legitimization of the (Roman) Church, the scene did not remain in the realm of exegetics, but was also transformed to visual and poetic forms. These were media of a different nature: early Christian poetry was anchored in classical poetry in a more stringent and direct way than most early Christian prose, although references to pagan culture abound there too. In art, the visual aspect offered both opportunities, due to the graphic illustrations of what in prose remained rather abstract, but also challenges, since it forced the producers of images of the entrance of heaven to depict it or to visualise it in some appropriate way. This was done with success,

21 See e.g. Aug. *Serm.* 149.7. The idea of Peter as gatekeeper of heaven and Paul as possessor of the keys of wisdom (*scientia*) is also found in early sermons, see Susman (1964) 71. Peter was known for his role as key-bearer to non-Christians too, see Von Harnack (1922) 3.

22 Cf. Cyprian *De Unitate* 4. For a concise discussion of early Christian exegesis on Matt. 16.16–19, see Pietri (1976) 1446–1450; much more elaborate: Ludwig (1952), 7–72 in particular.

23 Eliakim is mentioned in the genealogy of Christ: Matt. 1.13. Cf. Beare (1981) 355 on Matt. 16.19: 'The 'keys' are probably not to be understood as entrance keys, as if to suggest that Peter is authorized to admit or to refuse admission, but rather to the bundle of keys carried by the chief steward, for the opening of rooms and storechambers within the house—symbols of responsibilities to be exercised within the house of God (cf. Matt. 24.43, etc.).' See also Talbert (2010) 196.

24 Christ is not mentioned specifically in the passage, but was interpreted to be the subject of the prophecy in early Christian times already, see e.g. Weinrich (2004) 44–45.

however, since the story of Christ handing over the keys to Peter became one of the (rather few) standard scenes of early Christian art and is now known as the *traditio clavium*.[25]

Art and Heaven

The main challenge of artist was the abundance of possibilities: since no clear and unambiguous view on heaven and its gates existed, it was difficult to give an artistic impression of this theologically charged concept. In general, images in early Christian art remain close to the Biblical texts that served as a source of inspiration.[26] Another potential problem was the distinction between the doors of heaven and the doors of death (which were not distinguished from the doors of Hades) in pagan art, which had a long iconographical tradition.[27]

A safe way to depict heaven in early Christian art was depicting its colour and heavenly bodies, such as the stars and the moon, of which a famous example can be found in the mausoleum of Galla Placidia in Ravenna (425–426 CE). However, here heaven seems to be depicted mainly as part of the physical universe.[28] We also know depictions of heaven as a bucolic, paradisiacal sphere (e.g. the apse of the church of Sant' Apollinare in Classe).[29] Alternatively, the personification of heaven is used (a man holding the firmament: this is the pagan figure of *Caelus* (e.g. on the Velletri sarcophagus mentioned above) visible on Christian sarcophagi such as that of Junius Bassus (359 CE, Rep1 680) or the one which is now in the Oratorio di San Bernardino in Perugia (Rep2 123).[30]

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25 The phrasing *traditio clauium* is not found in Christian authors of antiquity, but generally used in modern publications on early Christian art. Maybe the closely related scene of the *traditio legis* stimulated the use of the term. The designation *traditio legis* is qualified 'neuzeitlich' in LThK s.v. (Stork), id. in LexMA (Engemann).

26 As appears e.g. from my analysis of the representation of the apostles: Dijkstra (2016).

27 For the motif of the door in Roman funerary culture, see Haarløv (1977) 55–56 in particular.

28 This type of decoration was also used in the Santa Costanza in Rome, see Rasch and Arbeiter (2007) 109–110 with *Tafel* 103. Cf. Lawrence (1932) 112 on sarcophagi of the star and wreath type, which did evoke the idea of heaven. For the wider context cf. RAC s.v. Himmel B II 3 (Lumpe/Bietenhard). Stars could also directly refer to the new status of the deceased, as appears clearly from the famous epigram of Damasus on Peter and Paul (no. 20).

29 See Russell (1997) 56–63 for heaven as a paradisiacal garden in early Christianity.

30 References to sarcophagi consist of the number given to them in the *Repertorium der christlich-antiken Sarkophage*. For Caelus, see e.g. RAC s.v. Himmel B II 4 (Lumpe/

This figure was firmly embedded in pre-Christian forms of art that often continued to be used in the Christian period.[31] *Parapetasmata* or (half-) open doors are also used to indicate the way to the afterlife, as can be seen e.g. on a Roman Christian child sarcophagus from the end of the third century (Rep1 658 from the early fourth century).[32] The centre of the decoration, which depicts a door that is ajar, is heavily damaged. A shepherd is visible on each side.[33] Half-open doors appear to be rare on Christian sarcophagi: this iconographical tradition seems to have been discontinued, maybe because it could be interpreted as implying multiple options for the deceased after death or because the pagan ring was too strong to reuse this image for the sensitive topic that life after death is in Christian theology. An image of a grave does appear on Christian sarcophagi in the context of the Passion: there are several instances in which the grave of Christ is shown either in a narrative context (referring to the lamentation of the women at the grave) or with closed doors, with one or two apostles at its side.[34]

Bietenhard). Caelus is depicted ten times on early Christian sarcophagi, see Provoost (2011a) 76.

31 Whereas the depiction of pagan characters from mythological narratives was rare on Christian sarcophagi—the sarcophagus of the Dioscuri (Rep3 51) could be considered an exception—figures with a more symbolical meaning and personifications, such as the Muses or *genii*, were frequently used, see e.g. Provoost (2011a) 116–134 or Provoost (2009) 96–107 (pp. 160–165 resp. 131–133 for pagan iconography on Christian sarcophagi).

32 Haarløv (1977) 56 emphasises that the depiction of half-open doors does not affect the central meaning of sarcophagi (as opposed to sarcophagi with closed or open doors). They are 'a clarification of what all of the monuments (…) are primarily concerned with: to demonstrate that there is a way out.'

33 See also Ossewaarde (2012) 577. Due to the context where the sarcophagus is found (the catacombs of Hippolytus), it is likely that the sarcophagus was containing the body of a Christian. For Christian sarcophagi with similar decoration, see Rep1 68 (same period) and Rep3 299 (410–455). For a full discussion of the theme of the half-open door, see Haarløv (1977).

34 Rep1 933, Rep2 250, Rep3 20 and Rep3 42 show the grave of Christ as a small tower in the scene of the women at the grave, for which see e.g. Christern-Briesenick (2003) 31 (not mentioning Rep2 250). Some sarcophagi from Toulouse (Rep3 243, Rep3 470 and Rep3 548, all dated 433–466) have a notably different grave monument with closed doors between two columns on a platform and embellished with pediment. This building is also interpreted as the grave of Christ, see Christern-Briesenick (2003) 220: '(…) Verehrung des Heiligen Grabes durch die Apostelfürsten ist ein neues, von den südwestgallischen Werkstätten in die Sarkophagplastik eingeführtes Thema (…).' However, a similar building in the background of the scene of Christ, Peter and the cock ('the denial') on a Roman

Another way to refer to the hereafter was to use an image of the heavenly Jerusalem.[35] Often, this symbolical city is shown in the background, consisting of the depiction of a series of gates in fortified walls, with Christ and the apostles prominently depicted in front of it: this imagery is found on the so-called city gate sarcophagi.[36] However, these representations were not identifiable through the image alone: whereas in images of the Christian flocks gathering from Jerusalem (the Jews) and Bethlehem (the heathens), the cities were sometimes labelled with place-names, Jerusalem on sarcophagi was not, although it is possible that in some cases a label was painted of which no trace has been preserved.[37] In most cases, however, it probably was the context of the image and the viewer's knowledge of biblical passages referring to elements visible on the sarcophagus that facilitated interpretation.

These sarcophagi appear from the second half of the fourth century onwards. The idea of a city of heaven with many gates could be derived from a biblical passage in the book of Revelation, in which the names of the apostles were said to be written on the foundations. It is a highly symbolical—but at the same time one of the most specific—description of the gates of the heavenly Jerusalem.[38]

It seems that the depiction of a gate as the representation of heaven was not deemed apt by the producers of early Christian poetry. Apparently, gates were associated too much with the gates of hell, mentioned often in the Old Testament and patristic texts alike, and with pagan images of the afterlife.[39] If

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sarcophagus from the fourth century has been interpreted as the holy grave by Wilpert (1938) 175 and 178.

35 Sansoni (1969) 77.

36 See Sansoni (1969). Later, this imagery would obtain a life of its own, e.g. when Valentinian III (425–55) decorated the *confessio* of Saint Peter's with an *imago* of twelve portals, twelve apostles and Christ, see *Liber Pontificalis* 46.4 and de Blaauw (1987) 236. The remarkable architectonical background of Rep1 677 has been interpreted as symbolic of the Church by Wilpert (1938) 175–178.

37 Images of Jerusalem and Bethlehem: TIP 186–187 s.v. Gerusalemme (Betori) and Dijkstra (2016b). For Jerusalem as heavenly city, see e.g. Russell (1997) 43.

38 Rev. 21.12–14: 'It had a great, high wall with twelve gates, and with twelve angels at the gates. On the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. There were three gates on the east, three on the north, three on the south and three on the west. The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.' Cf. Rev 21.21: 'The twelve gates were twelve pearls, each gate made of a single pearl.' In Latin poetry, this passage was used by Prudentius in *Psych.* 838–839.

39 In Haarløv's collection of early Christian texts on doors to the afterlife, it is remarkable that the metaphor of the door seems to be applied more often to the gates of hell than to the gates of heaven, see Haarløv (1977) 72–80. Also in Matt. 16, the gates of hell

the gates were no suitable option, the gatekeeper could still be brought forward. Indeed, we find the imagery of the *traditio clavium* (and the *Dominus legem dat*, see below) in early Christian art, which seems to have been privileged above other possible options as the main depiction of the entrance to the Christian heaven in a funerary context.

The *Traditio Clavium* in Art

The *traditio clavium* scene is a direct visualisation of the promise made by Christ to Peter in Matthew 16.19. It is a set image within the early Christian repertoire of images. The scene is plain (cf. figure 7.1): a man on the right hands over a key to another man in front of him who sometimes holds a second key in his *pallium*. In most cases, the men have features that identify them as Peter and Christ. Surrounding scenes could give more emphasis on the figure of Peter (e.g. in the case of figure 7.1, where Peter's arrest is depicted next to the *traditio clavium* scene). However, the keys are the main element of the scene: they provide a conclusive link to Matthew 16, even if the interpretation of that passage—and thus of its visual representation—remains ambiguous. The number of keys (commonly one or two) does not seem to be of major importance and is often difficult to determine due to damage caused over time.[40] Important for our analysis, is that the gate that is supposed to be opened with the keys is not depicted.

The *traditio clavium* scene appeared relatively late in the early Christian visual repertoire. A mosaic from the Santa Costanza, a mausoleum that was probably finished around the year 350, probably offers the first depiction of the scene.[41] The only other remaining mosaic in the Santa Costanza shows the so-called *Dominus legem dat* or *traditio legis* image, on which Christ presents

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are explicitly mentioned and those of heaven are only implied. Haarløv concludes (pp. 83–84) that the door was a symbol of an unpleasant place mainly in pagan texts and the Old Testament but became the symbol of the door to new life: the contrast she suggests here seems not entirely justified by her source material.

40 Incidentally, three keys also occur, e.g. on an ivory diptych from the sixth century (Volbach 154). For the *traditio clavium* scene in general, see e.g. RAC s.v. Petrus III (Dassmann).

41 See Rasch and Arbeiter (2007) 147–152. However, the original outlook of the mosaic is much disputed. Foletti and Quadri (2013) 24, e.g., doubt that a *traditio clavium* was depicted and suggest that the mosaic showed a *traditio legis* to Paul. Pietri (1976) 1444 suggests it was a *traditio legis* to Moses. The nine palms in the background have been interpreted differently in the course of time, but seem to be a reference to the supernatural realm: Rasch and Arbeiter (2007) 152.



FIGURE 7.1 *Fragment of a sarcophagus front* (*Rep3 154*) *with the* traditio clavium (*on the right*), *ca. 370–400, Musée lapidaire, Avignon.*
PHOTO: R. DIJKSTRA.

his new law to the apostles Peter and Paul. Since this scene was very popular and appears earlier than the *traditio clavium*, the latter is supposed to have been derived from the *Dominus legem dat* scene and to express more or less the same idea. At the same time, the explicit reference to the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven is a significant development in the iconographical representation of Peter. It highlights one of the most remarkable and laudatory moments for Peter in the most extended gospel of the Church. It hardly seems coincidental that this scene appears in a time in which the Roman bishop more vehemently emphasises his privileged position, which ultimately depended of Peter's martyrdom in Rome.

The *traditio clavium* mosaic in the Santa Costanza is the only example of the scene with Christ seated on a globe, instead of standing. The focus is still more on Christ than on Peter, as it is in the *Dominus legem dat*. Moreover, the paradisiacal setting of the *traditio clavium* scene might also be influenced by the *Dominus legem dat* mosaic.[42] From 370 onwards, the *traditio clavium* scene

42 Therefore, this mosaic is distinctively different from the *traditio clavium* on sarcophagi, as is emphasised by Foletti and Quadri (2013) 35 (note 39).

was—again in a funerary context—almost exclusively used on sarcophagi.[43] Christ and Peter are now represented in a more even way: they are both depicted upright. Without details such as the globe or the palms, Peter is exalted to an equal level with Christ (compared to the representation in the Santa Costanza mausoleum) and emphasis is put on the act of the handing over of the keys.

Although depictions generally show Peter, Christ and one or two keys, sometimes another disciple is added to the scene as a witness of the event (see figure 7.2). He represents the whole group of the apostles, which was present at the event described in the gospel of Matthew.[44] On a sarcophagus from the Vaucluse (end of the fourth century) a tree is added for decorative purposes (Rep3 167). Peter's knowledge could be emphasised by the depiction of a bundle of *volumina* at his feet (Rep2 124).

The appearance of the scene was clearly connected to the efforts of the bishop of Rome to propagate his authority. After all, it was not Christ or Peter alone who was depicted with the keys as an attribute, but the act of handing them over to the apostle. Thus the predecessor of the bishops of Rome was receiving the keys from the highest possible authority: Christ himself.[45] The group of early Christian sarcophagi with the *traditio clavium* scene can be divided in two categories: six sarcophagi found in Rome and eight sarcophagi found in Gaul (but in most cases produced in Rome).[46] Since the scene only

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43 Some traces or supposed traces of the scene remain in other forms of art, however, but often the one crucial element of the scene, the keys, is damaged. Such is the case for a silver vase from Rome, dated around 400 (see image in Rasch and Arbeiter (2007) 149; see also Spier (2007) 244–245 (no. 67) and RAC s.v. Petrus III (Dassmann) pp. 436 and 439), and the much more famous mosaic in the Santa Costanza in Rome discussed above. On a tile mentioned in the RAC, the scene is surrounded by two columns. Other scenes on similar tiles have the same frame, however, which makes a reference to a gate improbable, see Hattler (2009) 344–346 (nos. 290–294; 300). Guarducci (1958), pp. 458–465 in particular, discusses key-shaped ligatures of Peter's name among the graffiti under Saint Peter's, but her reading is disputed. For a favourable discussion of her ideas with some remarks on key-shaped graffiti, see Lampe (2015) 277–282.

44 For the apostles as witnesses of Christ in early Christian art, see Dijkstra (2016a) 351–360.

45 Cf. also Maccarrone (1962) 280–281: 'Die literarische oder künstlerische Darstellung von *Petrus* mit dem Schlüssel dient also vorzüglich dazu, seine Amtsgewalt über die Kirche zum Ausdruck zu bringen.' (p. 281).

46 One of the earliest examples comes from Civita Castellana, about 60 kilometres from Rome (Rep2 124). This one most clearly shows the act of the *traditio* with Peter receiving the key of Christ in his *pallium*, see Wilpert (1938) 164–165. The provenance of another one, now in Leiden, is unknown, but it was produced in Rome (Rep2 138; figure 7.2). Sarcophagi found in Rome: Rep1 200; 290; 464; 676; 755; 874. Sarcophagi found in Gaul:



FIGURE 7.2 *Detail of a sarcophagus* (*Rep2 138*) *with the* traditio clavium *and witnessing apostle, ca. 370–400, Rijksmuseum voor Oudheden, Leiden.*
PHOTO: R. DIJKSTRA.

occurs from the second half of the fourth century onwards, when the Roman clergy started to emphasise its apostolic roots, the Roman connection is clear: the theme was both stimulated by the Roman clergy as part of a broader campaign to emphasise Rome's claims of authority, which has become particularly famous through the efforts of Damasus, and is the reflection of a growing interest in the individual saint Peter and his work as an intercessor for the deceased. Peter had been the most popular saint to depict on sarcophagi from the first figural Christian images onwards, particularly popular because of his recognisable human weakness. He was therefore expected to be lenient towards Christians and willing to open the door of heaven, also to those who did not devote their entire life to Christ by working as priests or living an ascetical life. On sarcophagi, the appropriate image of Peter as intercessor seems to have been merged conveniently (for the Roman clergy) with that of Peter's authority. Influence from the clergy on the appearance of this scene was probably indirect, through their emphasis on Peter's position in sermons and by other means of communication to their flocks.

Some examples of *traditio clavium* scenes on sarcophagi are found in places that were specifically connected with Peter: first of all, one was found in Saint Peter's (Rep1 676), the focal point of veneration of Peter's relics. Second, two sarcophagi were placed at the cemetery of the Basilica Apostolorum, probably devoted to both Peter and Paul, at the Via Appia (Rep1 200; 290). A third sarcophagus was found in the S. Pietro in Vincoli church (Rep1 755), allegedly the first church in Rome founded by Peter himself.[47] People who were buried in and around these churches were probably particularly well aware of or devoted to the cult of Peter.

The gate to heaven, however, was absent in the *traditio clavium* scene, as stated above. A unique sarcophagus from modern Croatia (figure 7.3), however, might reflect an attempt to depict it. The iconography of this sarcophagus goes back to sarcophagi from the third century, when bucolic elements such as sheep-bearers, birds and *genii* became popular themes. A combination of such bucolic elements and gates could call to mind biblical imagery. After all, Christ himself was likened to a gate and the faithful to sheep in John 10.9: 'I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go

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Rep3 56; 86; 154 (figure 7.1); 166; 167; 445; 497b; 499. All sarcophagi can be found in an unpublished, revised version of the catalogue by Provoost (2011b-c), kindly provided to me by the author in 2014.

47 See Deproost (1990) 32 and Matthiae (1969) 20–22 about the various names used for the church before use of the current name, which was first attested in the fifth century. The legend about Peter's foundation of the church is in the *Martyrologium Hieronymianum*.



FIGURE 7.3 *Detail of a sarcophagus front (Rep2 297) with a possible depiction of the Good Shepherd as the central scene, beginning of the fourth century, Arheološki Muzej u Splitu, Split.*
PHOTO: R. DIJKSTRA.

out, and find pasture.' The sarcophagus mentioned, now in the Archaeological Museum in Split (Rep2 297; figure 7.3) might have been intended to refer to this idea of Christ as the gate, since a shepherd bearing a lamb on his shoulders holds the centre of the composition.[48] It was found in a Christian context and has a clear emphasis on architectural elements in its decoration. Besides the columns on the corners of the sarcophagus, the central *aedicula* is signalled out by its high relief. It attracts the view of the beholder by its scarcity of decoration (compared to the scenes on its left and right). The short sides of the sarcophagus bear a more common depiction of the (closed) doors of the grave on the right and an *aedicula* with cupid on the left. This sarcophagus does not contain any specifically Christian elements, but early sarcophagi

48 Cf. Dresken-Weiland (1998) 106: 'Obwohl der Sarkophag in einer Tradition dalmatischer architektonischer Sarkophage steht, ist er doch stilistisch und ikonographisch ein Einzelstück (…)'. The sequence of gables and *aediculae* and the cornice above are characteristic of sarcophagi in Asiatic style, but produced in the west, see Lawrence (1932) 139.

are more often less ostentatiously Christian in their imagery.[49] It is tempting to interpret the figure in the central scene as the Good Shepherd (John 10.11; 14), although no certainty can be reached. The ambivalence might have been intended: in that case both Christian and non-Christian viewers found a familiar image on the sarcophagus, which they could relate to their own beliefs. In any case, given that later Christian usage is certain, it seems reasonable to suppose that people in these later periods considered the sarcophagus to refer to Christian themes.

Given the rather popular theme of Jerusalem in art as stated above and also given the biblical passages mentioned earlier, the use of a gate in the depiction of the *traditio clavium* scene would have been natural, but the iconographical record shows that it did not make it into the standard depiction of the scene.[50] The act of handing over the keys of heaven inevitably evokes the image of a gate, even if it was a symbolic idea. However, only on a sarcophagus from Saint-Maximin-la-Sainte-Baume (Rep3 499) we find something which comes close to a gate, but since this belongs to the type of the so-called 'city gate sarcophagi', the gates are part of the background of all scenes on the sarcophagus and not connected to the *traditio clavium* scene in particular. The owner of this sarcophagus showed a particular fondness of Petrine themes and had both the *traditio legis* and the *traditio clavium* depicted on the same sarcophagus (with other Petrine scenes).[51]

Apart from the gate, other symbols of heaven or paradise, such as palm trees or a phoenix, are not found either in the *traditio clavium*, but rather in the *Dominus legem dat* scene.[52] One of the reasons seems to be that the *traditio clavium* scene was depicting a historical event, i.e. an event mentioned in the gospels (even if most people did not assume that Christ literally gave a (pair

49 TIP s.v. *porta* (Goffredo). See Cambi (1994) 39–53 in particular. Bandinelli (1976) 131–132 also provided a Christian interpretation. Cf. Dresken-Weiland (1998) 105–106, who does not decide on the interpretation. Likewise: Haarløv (1977) 37–39 and 137–138.

50 In a rare late antique depiction of the expulsion from paradise following the Fall of men (Rep1 23), a gate or other indication of paradise is also missing; only an angel is depicted, who urges Adam to leave. References to specific buildings or structures are generally scarce on early Christian sarcophagi (cf. e.g. Dijkstra (2016b)).

51 This sarcophagus is not mentioned by Spera in Bisconti (2010) 292, who mentions Rep1 200 and 676 as examples of sarcophagi with both scenes, together with the mosaics of the Santa Costanza. Berger (1973) 111 (note 26) mentions the description of a veil in Hagia Sophia which according to him describes a *Dominus legem dat* scene in which Peter is represented as the bearer of the key to the heavenly gates.

52 Exception to this rule is of course the mosaic from the Santa Costanza discussed above.

of) keys to Peter), in contrast to the *Dominus legem dat*. Although paradisiacal elements could have indicated what lay behind the gate to which the keys gave access (as such it is easy to imagine them in the background of the *traditio clavium* scene), apparently the keys alone sufficed to interpret the scene. Or maybe, thinking along the lines of our interpretation of the sarcophagus from Split, the figure of Christ reminded the viewer of the gate of heaven. However, this suggestion remains hypothetical, since it was not made explicit in visual terms.

The *Traditio Clavium* in Verse

The medium of poetry obviously is closer to that of prose than art. The restrictions that producers of art might have felt or imposed on themselves, are therefore not necessarily at play in early Christian poetry too. Therefore, the image of the gate of heaven could potentially be further developed. A first observation is that the scene of the *traditio clavium* was indeed also caught on in poetry. The most elaborate poetical reference to Peter and the keys is in the biblical epic of Juvencus, which is also the first openly Christian classicizing poem in Latin literature (published around 330).[53] His versification of Matthew 16.18–19 is one of his more extensive digressions on his biblical source text: two bible verses are transposed to five hexameters (the whole pericope, Matt. 16.16–19, is versified in seventeen lines), in which the figure of Peter is clearly exalted vis-à-vis the biblical text. Juvencus was a catholic presbyter and as such likely to have had some interest in the legitimization of authority of his Church. A comparison with the biblical text makes clear that the poet strongly changed his model. In both texts quoted below, elements that are only mentioned in one of the two are in boldface. The *Vetus Latina* reads:

> 18. **Et ego dico tibi** tu es Petrus, et super hanc petram aedificabo ecclesiam meam; et portae inferi non praeualebunt eius. 19. Et tibi dabo claues regni caelorum.[54]

Juvencus changes this into the following lines (3.279–284):

53 For Juvencus, see now McGill (2016), also Green (2006).

54 *Vetus Latina Itala*, text: Jülicher (1963).

> Hac in mole mihi **saxique in robore**[55] ponam
> **semper mansuras aeternis moenibus** aedes.
> Infernis **domus haec non exsuperabile** portis
> claustrum perpetuo munitum robore habebit;
> caelestisque tibi claues permittere regni
> est animus;[56]
>
> On this rock and on the strength of this boulder I will build my everstanding house with its eternal walls. This house, invincible even by the infernal gates, will have a lock protected with eternal strength. It is my will to entrust to you the keys of the heavenly kingdom.

The poet symbolises the Church by a house with strong walls and gates. These elements are added by Juvencus to the biblical text. It shows that the biblical passage invited people to elaborate on its rather straightforward description and to extend the imagery. The *biblical* image of the keys is taken over by Juvencus, but he adds the lock that fits the keys. Although at first it seems to belong to the Church on earth, Juvencus' audience undoubtedly connected its imagery to the following statement on the kingdom of heaven. The gates of heaven remain unmentioned, but they are evoked both by the lock and the keys and the non-Christian powers referred to in *infernis … portis* (see below). These words enclose the whole line. That hell was also closed by gates, is stated in Matthew 16.19, but also in the Old Testament (Isa. 38.10).[57] Although he is

55 Variant in two mss: *validoque in marmore*, see Bauer (1999) 161–162: 'so ist eine Autorenvariante *validoque in marmore* durchaus möglich' (p. 162).

56 Text: Huemer (1891). Translations of Juvencus are my own. Commentary in McGill (2016), other useful commentaries on this passage are Bauer (1999) *ad locum* and Santorelli (in Canali, Santorelli et alii (2011) 350–351. According to the latter, the keys are a 'simbolo di autorità e responsabilità', p. 350). Cf. Pietri (1976) 1454. See for my interpretation of the passage also Dijkstra (2016a) 90–92 (with different emphasis). The publication of my earlier work regrettably crossed Müller (2016), who has a digression on the figure of Peter in Juvencus on pp. 39–61; 46–50 discuss 'Der Primat Petri'.

57 The gates in Isaiah are mentioned in the versions of the *Vetus Latina*, the Vulgate and the Septuagint, although they lack in some modern translations. See for the gates of hell also Eppel (1950), who suggests—without compelling arguments—that the Old Testament concept was wrongly translated into the New Testament and proposes to read 'gatekeepers' instead of 'gates' in Matt. 16.19, in order to make the imagery of the sentence more coherent. Bauer (1999) 162 points to an anonymous Latin translation of the commentary of the Psalms by Theodore of Mopsuestia where the *claustrum munitum* used by Juvencus is applied to a reference to the gate of hell (*Expositio in psalmos* 106).

not explicitly described as such, Peter is the gatekeeper of heaven in Juvencus' text. The omission of the word *ecclesia* is part of the poet's classicizing style, but also emphasises Juvencus' concrete idea about the 'ever standing house of Christ'.[58] Moreover, it allows Juvencus to evoke the idea of Peter as a gatekeeper by describing the Church as a house protected by walls and a lock. Juvencus' classicizing style is also visible in his use of the word *exsuperabile* (l. 281), which is an extremely rare word, which is used in Vergil's *Georgica* 3.39. There, the words *non exsuperabile saxum* are the last words of an ekphrasis (ll. 26–39) of the doors of a temple Vergil announces to build in Mantua (ll. 10–39). In the ekphrasis, the words refer to the boulder that Sisyphus was doomed to roll up the hill. Not only was Vergil Juvencus' source of inspiration, the word *portis* which closes his line 281 is given more relief by the Vergilian context to which the line refers. De *infernis portis* of l. 281 might even be read to refer to the temples of pagan religion which Juvencus saw as anti-Christian. The passage tellingly illustrates Juvencus' attempts to introduce classical culture in biblical literature: in this crucial passage with large theological consequences, the Christian poet prefers to refer to Vergil, although he loses the famous wordplay between Petrus and the rock (*petra*) on which Christ promises to build his church (Matt. 16.18).[59]

Several poets after Juvencus went along the same lines in their versification of Matthew 16.18–19. One of them was Arator (sixth century), the first poet to versify the biblical Acts by writing his *Historia apostolica*, which was a kind of commentary on Acts.[60] He is considered one of the last antique successors of Juvencus. An important aim of Arator's poem was praising the apostle Peter. The poem was devoted to the Roman bishop Vigilius (537–555). Contrary to most other texts from (late) antiquity, we are informed about the performance situation of Arator's poem in a quite extensive way. In 544, part of Arator's *Historia apostolica* was recited first in St Peter's for the clergy and then in the San Pietro in Vincoli, where it met with great success and approval.[61]

58 Müller (2016) 48 points to the late use of *ecclesia* for church building (starting with Augustine): 'Vielmehr wurde *ecclesia* vor Iuvencus nicht für das Gebäude gebraucht. Daher verwendet Iuvencus hier das konkretere *aedes*.'

59 Cf. Green (2006) 60; Müller (2016) 48–49. The latter downplays Juvencus' theological interests in this passage, since the poet does not include John 21.15–23 in his versification, see p. 61. The reference to Vergil is an additional argument in favour of the reading *saxique in robore* as opposed to *validoque in marmore*, which elevates the register, but loses the play of intertextuality explained above.

60 Hillier (1993) 12–14.

61 See Sotinel (1989), also Deproost (1990) 28–34.

Arator describes Peter as *claviger aethereus*, heavenly key-bearer, a in a passage on the biblical story of Acts 11.1–18, in which Peter sees the heavens opened and the food which he was not allowed to eat according to Jewish law coming down from heaven.[62] Although this story offers a context entirely different from that of the *traditio clavium* scene in Matthew, Arator's choice to emphasise Peter's well-known role as *claviger* of heaven in a passage where the heavens are opened to him, seems logical. His vision teaches him to accept all people honouring Christ, both Jewish and non-Jewish. This recalls Peter's role as an intercessor for the sins of people. Nevertheless, Arator is the first poet to combine the two stories. Moreover, it was only the second time that a poet referred to Acts 11.1–18.[63]

The door entrusted to Peter is explicitly mentioned by Arator in another passage, which for our theme is most interesting. In *Historia apostolica* 1.244–292 Arator versifies the story of the paralysed man at the *Porta speciosa* in Jerusalem (Acts 3.1–10). Here, several images come together and the word *porta* is used both literally and metaphorically: the paralysed man is sitting in a real, physical gate in the earthly Jerusalem.[64] This is the story recalled by Arator, evoking the image of a city gate for his audience, which was acquainted with monumental gates by both the 'real' Roman gates and artistic impressions of city gates. It also evokes the passage from John in which Christ says that he is a

62 *Historia apostolica* 1.899–900: *Clauiger aetherius caelum conspexit apertum usus honore suo* 'The heavenly key-bearer has seen an open heaven, taking advantage of his position'. All translations of Arator are my own. Texts from Arator are taken from www.mqdq.it (digital edition by L. Calzavara, 2010), accessed at 19-10-2015. The *clauiger aetherius* resembles Dracontius' *ianitor aethereus* in *Laudes Dei* 3.227. Cf. for Arator's references to Peter as key-bearer and gatekeeper Deproost (1990) 150–155 and Green (2006) 317–321. For the success of the *claviger aethereus* in general, see e.g. Licht (2008) 169 and TLL s.v. *claviger* for some other instances.

63 An earlier reference can be found in Prud. *Dittochaeon* 46, without any link to other Petrine passages. Prudentius' *titulus* might have accompanied an image of the story; although no such image survives, it was probably part of the cycle of Peter's life in old Saint Peter's, see Lubian (2013).

64 Cf. Peter's emphasis on the *porta speciosa* in *Dittochaeon* 45, for which Davis-Weyer (1986) 22 even assumed a connection with the construction of the temple of Solomon described in *Dittochaeon* 2. It is doubtful, however, whether Prudentius' *tituli* were ever destined for practical use, see e.g. Lehmann (2010). Both in Prudentius and Arator, the presence of John at the miracle is ignored. In Paulinus of Nola *Carmen* 20.241–251, he is shortly mentioned. More importantly, Paulinus also explicitly mentions the *porta speciosa* (l. 247). It seems that Paulinus mainly stresses the contrast between the poverty of the lame man (*pauper*) and the precious gate: see Dijkstra (2016a) 207 and 250–251.

door for the sheep, i.e. the faithful, which we encountered in the analysis of the sarcophagus from Split (figure 7.3; *Historia apostolica* 1.277–283; cf. John 10.7):[65]

> Et portae qui nomen habet sic admonet ipse:
> porta ego sum uobis; qui per me intrare recusat
> fur erit ille nocens. Possunt portare prophetae
> ad portam, cernenda magis quam uisa loquentes;
> in templum non ferre queunt; haec ianua Petro
> credita, qui Christum confessus cognita monstrat,
> non ventura sonat.
>
> And He himself who bears the name of the door admonishes you: 'I am the door for you; whoever refuses to enter through Me, that man will be a pernicious thief.' The prophets can take men to the door, speaking more about things to be seen than things seen. But they cannot bring men to the temple. That door was entrusted to Peter, who shows things known, while confessing Christ, and does not speak about the future.

The pre-eminence of Peter over the prophets of the Old Testament is emphasised: they could bring people to the gate, but Peter is the only one who is able to open it. The image of the keys, which is used elsewhere in Arator's epic, has been shifted here to that of the door itself.

Peter's function at the gates of heaven was also transposed to a similar function on earth. Arator hints at this idea in his versification of another Petrine story in which doors play a crucial role: his liberation from prison (Acts 12.6–10).[66] Arator again does not miss the opportunity to point to Peter's special position, shared, in his view, by the Roman bishop. The poet's version of the story ends as follows (*Historia apostolica* 1.1054–1057):

> Ferrea quid mirum si cedunt ostia Petro,
> quem Deus aetheriae custodem deputat aulae
> ecclesiaeque suae faciens retinere cacumen,
> infernum superare iubet.

65 Cf. Deproost (1990) 152–153.

66 This story also made recitation of the work particularly appropriate in the San Pietro in Vincoli, where relics of Peter's chains were kept.

> Are you surprised that iron doors yield to Peter, whom God appoints as guard of the heavenly palace and, while making him to retain the top of His Church, orders to overcome the underworld?

Peter's power is emphasised even more by the marked contrast between *cacumen* and *infernum*. Moreover, the doors of iron mentioned at the beginning may also refer to the infernal gates mentioned at the end of the passage, since these were made of iron too, according to Psalm 106.16.[67] At the end of the first book of the *Historica apostolica*, Peter (*in concreto* his relics) is invoked as the protector of the city of Rome (ll. 1070–1075). Similar ideas are found in some metrical inscriptions from Late Antiquity.[68] It was no coincidence that from Teoderic onwards, kings and other rulers started a tradition of visiting St Peter's before visiting Rome itself. Both this practice and the poems I mentioned show that from a gatekeeper of heaven, Peter became a gatekeeper on earth too, which was made explicit in an inscription from the beginning of the fifth century above the Roman 'gate of Peter' (I quote lines 3–10):

> Nunc caelo est similis uere nunc inclyta Roma,
> cuius claustra docent intus inesse deum.
> Ianitor ante fores fixit sacraria Petrus:
> quis neget has arces instar habere poli?
> Admitti ad caelos mortalia corpora credas
> sub pedibus domini dum pia porta patet.
> Pestes bella famem insidias casusque nefandos
> erecta omnipotens arcet ab urbe manu.
>
> Now, at present, it really is comparable to heaven, famous Rome, the locks of which show God's presence in the city to us. As a gatekeeper Peter has established his sanctuaries before the gates. Who would deny that these fortresses are as strong as heaven? You would think that mortal bodies are

67 *Ferreae fores* according to the Vulgate, πύλας χαλκᾶς in the Septuagint. The gates mentioned in this verse were considered the entrances of hell by early Christian authors such as Firmicus Maternus *err.* 24.2.

68 E.g. ICUR 2.4119 from the door to Saint Peter's ll. 23–24: *Tu modo caelorum quapropter ianitor alme | fac tranquilla tui tempora cuncta gregis*. In ICUR 2.4786a (only two lines), also from Rome, *ianitor caeli* (1) is one of the five honorary titles for Peter. In literature cf. Dracontius *Laudes Dei* 3.222–239, l. 227 in particular, and Victorinus *De Iesu Christo* 65–67. Peter is also called *ianitor caeli* in hymns, e.g. in the hymn *Aurea luce* (*hymni christiani anonymi* 126, often ascribed to Elpis, the wife of Boethius).

> admitted to heaven at the feet of the Lord, while the pious door is open. Illness, wars, famine, ambushes and impious affairs are warded off from the city by the hand of the Almighty.[69]

Behind this inscription looms the concrete idea of a city in heaven: the comparison to heaven not only works as praise for the Roman walls, but it also evokes the image of a celestial city that looks like the 'eternal' city of Rome. In his new function as earthly gatekeeper, Peter entered competition with the traditional protector of the city: the emperor. Augustine poses the rhetorical question whether Honorius will bend his knee at Saint Peter's or at the mausoleum of Hadrian, located close by, in a reference to the emperor's entry in Rome.[70] In Arator's case, influence from the papal court is evident.[71] This might also be tangible in the link Arator suggests between the gate to the heavenly Jerusalem and earthly Rome: at the closure of book one, it is said that God, who opens the way to heaven, does not allow war in Rome.[72]

The focus on Peter's position at the door of heaven instead of his possession of the keys had already been apparent in poetry long before Arator.[73] The following lines are part of a fragmented epigram by the Roman bishop Damasus

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69 ICUR 2.4107, from the pontificate of Symmachus (498–514). Translation is my own. See Liverani (2007) 93 and *passim* on imperial visits to Rome and the role of Saint Peter's. Cf. Wright (2000) 165: 'This image is natural, for just as one would pass through gates to enter an ancient city, so one must pass through gates to enter the divine realm.' A similar idea can be seen in Paulinus of Nola's presentation of the door to the church as entry to heaven (*Ep*. 32.12), discussed in this volume in the contribution by Herbert de la Portbarré-Viard (chapter 10).

70 Discussed in Liverani (2007) 83–84.

71 The metaphor of the gatekeeper could be reversed too, as is shown by Paul the Silentiary: he mentions the emperor as a gatekeeper of heaven on earth in his *Ekphrasis of Hagia Sophia* (*Descriptio Sanctae Sophiae* 173–174), see also the contribution by Van Opstall (chapter 1 in this volume). Clearly, the figure of Peter was more prominent in Rome than in Constantinople.

72 *Historia apostolica* 1.1076: *claudit iter bellis qui portam pandit in astris*. Cf. the metaphor of closing and opening in Rev. 3.7 (= Isa. 22.22), in which the key of the house of David is mentioned, discussed above. One is also reminded of the doors of the Roman temple of Janus, which were closed in times of peace and opened during war.

73 Another famous author, writing slightly later than Arator, is Venantius Fortunatus, who combines the image of Peter at the gates (cf. e.g. *Carmen* 3.7, ll. 3 and 10; in line 3 Peter shares this responsibility with the apostle Paul, cf. the *spuriorum appendix* 1.293 to Venantius' work on mqdq.it) with an emphasis on Peter's keys in passages where the poet mentions only one characteristic of the apostle. Maybe this reflects some influence of images of the apostle with the key(s) as a symbol. Typical is the reference to the dogmas of

(366–384), who was bishop of Rome at the time that the first image of the *traditio clavium* scene appeared on Christian sarcophagi. He probably composed this poem for the Vatican baptistery (*Ep*. 5.2–3):

> sed prestante Petro cui tradita ianua caeli est,
> antistes Christi conposuit Damasus.
>
> but with Peter as surety, to whom heaven's door was entrusted, Damasus, bishop of Christ, arranged these things.[74]

Unfortunately, the rest of the poem is almost entirely lost, but the link between Peter as the gatekeeper of heaven and baptism is attested in several other inscriptions.[75] Baptism was a necessary condition to enter heaven. The Vatican baptistery only reinforced the idea that the apostle could provide access to the heavenly realm by seeing to a Christian's spiritual rebirth.[76]

Achilles, bishop of Spoleto (Umbria) in the early fifth century, also refers to Peter as *arbiter in terris, ianitor in superis*, comparing his function in heaven to that on earth, in one of the four epigrams on his name that were used as inscriptions.[77] Achilles' epigram is basically a versification of Matthew 16.16–19. All elements discussed above are also found in this inscription: Peter is said to control the lock of heaven (l. 16: *caelorum fortia claustra*, cf. Juvencus) and has the keys (l. 11: *clauibus*) of the doors of heaven (l. 10: *portae caelorum*).

Paul and the key(s) of Peter, e.g. in 3.7.9; 5.3.35; 8.1.10 (directly following a reference to the paradisiacal nourishments of Christ) and 10.7.19. Cf. also *Carmen* 2.13.

74 Text: Ferrua (1942). Translation: Trout (2015). Besides these two authors, Reutter (2009) also offers a commentary on the poem. Similar to Damasus cf. Prudentius *Peristephanon* 2.462–464 about Peter: *alter, cathedram possidens / primam, recludit creditas / aeternitatis ianuas*. The hymn is devoted to Laurentius, who is compared to Peter (among other things) by his possession of the 'keys of the heavenly dwelling' in ll. 41–44, cf. Fux (2003) 160.

75 Cf. Deproost (1990) 109–110 and id. 150 about Peter, referring to *Historia apostolica* 1.74–75: 'La clé est peut-être un extravagant substitut de l'hameçon dans sa pêche baptismale.' For Peter's involvement in baptism in general, see e.g. the discussion of Arator's references to this aspect of the apostle in Hillier (1993) 31–37. On baptism, see the contribution by Day in this volume (chapter 2).

76 The text of the first letter on Peter's name in the New Testament might also have added to this idea, see 1 Pet 3.17–22.

77 CIL 11.4765. For Achilles of Spoleto and a brief statement on his four epigrams, see Binazzi (1989) 80; 89–90 for no. 46, ending with *arbiter in terris*. Cf. also Maccarrone (1978), Quasten (1994) 318–319 and Rouziès (1912) 1.314–315.

Since a relic of the chains by which Peter had been bound in prison (see Acts 12.1–19) was shown in the church for Peter at Spoleto, the story of Peter's liberation from prison was connected to his power to unbind (cf. Arator above): a hint may be seen in Achilles' epigram (ll. 10–11, literally referring to the prison of death which is hell). In another epigram from Achilles the link is even more explicit.[78]

The word *ianitor*, gatekeeper, was particularly popular with poets.[79] It is used for mythical figures like Cerberus and Janus.[80] Therefore, it had clear classical reminiscences, just like the idea of the gate as an entry to the hereafter. Christians also used it sometimes for angels or priests. In late antique poetry, the word *ianitor* is used more often for Peter than the word *claviger* (which is rarer in classical poetry too). The latter is only applied to Peter by Arator and the seventh century author Iulianus Toletanus.[81] Although *ianitor* is not exclusively used for Peter in early Christian poetical texts, it refers eight times to the apostle and only five times to someone else.[82] In one instance, it designates Leo the Great, in his (claimed) position as the successor of the apostle as bishop of Rome.[83]

Conclusion

Apart from some apocryphal texts, the metaphor of the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven was only poorly developed beyond the biblical text of Matthew 16 in the mainstream culture of the early Christian era. On sarcophagi, the keys were a symbol of both the power bestowed on Peter by Christ according to

78 CIL 11.2.1: solue iuuante dõ terrarum petre catenas / qui facis ut pateant caelestia regna beatis / ipse tua petre disrumpi uincula iussit / qui te constituit mundanos soluere nexus.

79 TLL s.v. gives several usages of the word *ianitor*. The headings of the lemma are the following: servus vel libertus, cui aditus domus custodiendus est, de custodibus aliarum portarum, tropice, de Iano, domus caelestis (cf. claviger), de Petro, de angelis, trop. de sacerdotibus, de custodibus aditus inferorum, de Cerbero custode Orci, de Charone?, apud Eccl. de custodibus aedium sacrarum vel monasteriorum, de Anubide, de aliis numinibus ianuarum tutoribus.

80 Apart from the word *claviger*, Arator also refers to Peter with the metrically better fitting word *custos*, again a word that was linked to Cerberus, as was *ianitor*: Deproost (1990) 152–153.

81 Cf. TLL s.v. *claviger*, which mentions references to Hercules, Janus and Peter.

82 Prud. *Peristephanon* 5.349; Boethius *Consol.* 3.30; Orientius *Commonitorium* 2.109; Dracontius *laud. dei* 3.227; Victorinus *Christ*. 65 and *Carmina minora appendix* 4.8; Corippus Laud. Iust. 1.90 and *Anthologia Latina* 21.140.

83 ICUR 2.4148, see Carletti (2008) 209–210.

Matt. 16.16–19 and the entrance to heaven for deceased Christians. Comparable to the representation of other biblical stories, the visualisation of the *traditio clavium* scene was simple and only provided the main element of the story: the key(s). The same restraint towards explicating topographical and historical aspects which characterizes early Christian art in general was also applied to this scene. Moreover, several aspects of the biblical passage were already covered by other scenes in the early Christian iconographical repertoire: the paradisiacal sphere to which Peter's keys gave access was hinted at in the comparable *Dominus legem dat* scene and the gate to heaven was represented in the figure of Christ (cf. John 10.7–9). Therefore, representation of the gate itself was considered of minor importance. Moreover, the image of a gate or doors may have been considered too pagan in nature to serve as representation of the entry to heaven. Pagan motifs in general were frequently taken over by Christians, including bucolic elements used to evoke the landscape of paradise, but the entrance to the afterlife with its strict separation of good and bad people (cf. e.g. Matthew 7.13–14) appears to have been too crucial to undergo classical influence. Both the traditional pagan idea of the afterlife as a place without happiness and the image of the gates of hell—which in the Old Testament as well as in early Christian writers appears to have been stronger than the image of the gates of heaven—impeded the development of an image that visualised the gate to heaven *in concreto*. Moreover, an alternative was available in the form of the keys, which had no specific non-Christian connotation at all. Nevertheless, in visual representations of Peter, it was not before the fifth century that keys became the fixed attribute of the apostle as a symbol of his authority more or less detached from the biblical-historical event in Matthew.[84] Maybe the *traditio clavium* scene disappeared due to competition with the more popular *Dominus legem dat* scene in which Paul had a place too.

In poetry, the figure of Christ seems less central: reference is more often to Peter as gatekeeper than to the *traditio* proper. Elaboration on Peter's role as a gatekeeper is most detailed in epic, especially in Arator. He brings several aspects together: not only different interpretations of the idea of Peter as a gatekeeper of heaven, but also the particular interest of the Roman Church in this biblical passage. Given the background of the poets discussed in this paper, poetry came from an environment which was closer to official dogma than visual art. The imagery of sarcophagi was only influenced in an indirect

84 Cf. e.g. Sotomayor (1962) 71 and TIP 292 s.v. *Traditio legis et clavium* (Spera); also Wilpert (1938) 163–165. The basilica of Felix and Adauctus in the Commodilla catacombs has a depiction of the *traditio clavium* from the second half of the seventh century, see *idem* and Deckers et al. (1994) 50–57, pp. 52–53 in particular.

way, with the exception, maybe, of the sarcophagi found in places that were central to the petrine cult in Rome.

No real elaboration on the outlook of the door to heaven is ever given either in poetry or in art. It is suggested that the door is fortified, locked and also guarded. Keys are necessary to get in. As on sarcophagi, these keys remain the core element of the story, but in poetry the gate—and with it Peter's position as gatekeeper in particular—becomes more important in the course of time. From a gatekeeper of heaven Peter became a gatekeeper on earth, in particular of the city of Rome.

Despite the lack of artistic embellishment, the frequent appearance of Peter as a gatekeeper in both media testifies to the importance of Peter's role at the gate which was to increase in the following centuries. Only in poetry the scene was developed beyond its original context. Without ever coming to extensive descriptions of the keys or the gate to which they gave access, creativity was shown in the elaboration on the exegetically disputed passage on Peter's role in church (Matt. 16.16–19) and in shifting the meaning of this text to more mundane matters, such as the defence of the earthly city of Rome.[85]

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Abbreviations

CIL *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum.* See for the volumes: http://cil.bbaw.de/cil_en/index_en.html

ICUR G.B. De Rossi (ed.) (1888) *Inscriptiones Christianae Urbis Romae 2*. Roma.

LexMA *Lexikon des Mittelalters*, 10 vols. (1977–1999) in Brepolis Medieval Encyclopaedias—Lexikon des Mittelalters Online. See http://www.brepolis.net

LthK J. Höfer and K. Rahner (eds) (2009[3]) *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*. Freiburg im Breisgau.

RAC (1950– …) *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*. Stuttgart.

RE A.F. von Pauly and G. Wissowa (eds) (1894–1997) *Realencyclopädie der Classischen Altertumswissenschaft.* Stuttgart.

Rep1 Deichmann (1967)

Rep2 Dresken-Weiland (1998)

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Rep3 Christern-Briesenick (2003)
TIP Bisconti (2000, 2010²)
TLL *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae.* Berlin/Boston. Online version.

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PART 3

Messages in Stone

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CHAPTER 8

The Queen of Inscriptions Contextualized

The Presence of Civic Inscriptions in the pronaos *of Ancient Temples in Hellenistic and Roman Asia Minor* (*Fourth Century* BCE*–Second Century* CE)

Evelien J.J. Roels

The monumental inscription carved on the walls of the temple of Roma and Augustus in Ancyra, which records the *Res gestae divi Augusti*, has been described and discussed for over five hundred years, having justly acquired the honorary title of *regina inscriptionum*.[1] This chapter does not intend to shed new light on its contents and what it means for our knowledge of the reign of Augustus (as Augustus saw it) nor on the evidence it contains for the spread of the imperial cult in Asia Minor. The *monumentum Ancyranum* (fig. 8.1a), as the remains of the imperial inscription in Ancyra are known, will serve a rather different goal, namely to provide an example of a phenomenon that can be found in various temples in Asia Minor: the presence of inscriptions in the *pronaos*.[2]

When we have a look at the spatial arrangement of this famous inscription in both Greek and Latin versions,[3] two things stand out. First, whereas the Greek version has been carved on the temple's southern sidewall (fig. 8.1b DJ), divided into nineteen different columns, the Latin (original) version was inscribed on the inside of the *pronaos* (CJ), the first three columns on the northern *anta* and the other three on the southern *anta*.[4] Second, the *Res gestae* is not the

1 The term 'the queen of inscriptions' was coined by Theodor Mommsen (1887) 385.

2 In this article, the area of the *pronaos* is defined as the architectural space visible for the visitor frontally approaching the temple, i.e. the area located right in front of the *cella*'s doorway and framed by the antae walls on the left and right side. Hence the antae themselves, the wall of the doorway and the front side of the *antae* pillars are taken into consideration. The exterior of the *pronaos* walls, however, is excluded from my analysis since it did not establish a visual connection with the visitor who approached the doorway.

3 Mitchell (2012) 66. The temple of Roma and Augustus was directed westwards contrary to the more common orientation towards the east.

4 Note that the two versions of the *Res gestae* in Ancyra differ in terms of the layout of text. While the Latin text was inscribed in relatively small letters (ca. 2 cm in height) in three columns on each side of the *pronaos*, the Greek text had considerably larger letters (ca. 3 cm in height) and was divided in a greater number of columns. Accordingly, the Greek text must have been much easier to read. For a short discussion of these differences and their consequences for the visibility and legibility of both texts, see Von Hesberg (2009) 20–22.

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FIGURE 8.1A *The* pronaos *of the temple of Roma and Augustus in Ancyra, seen from the south-west. Parts of the Latin version of the* Res gestae *are visible on the northern* (*left*) anta.
PHOTO: E.J.J. ROELS.

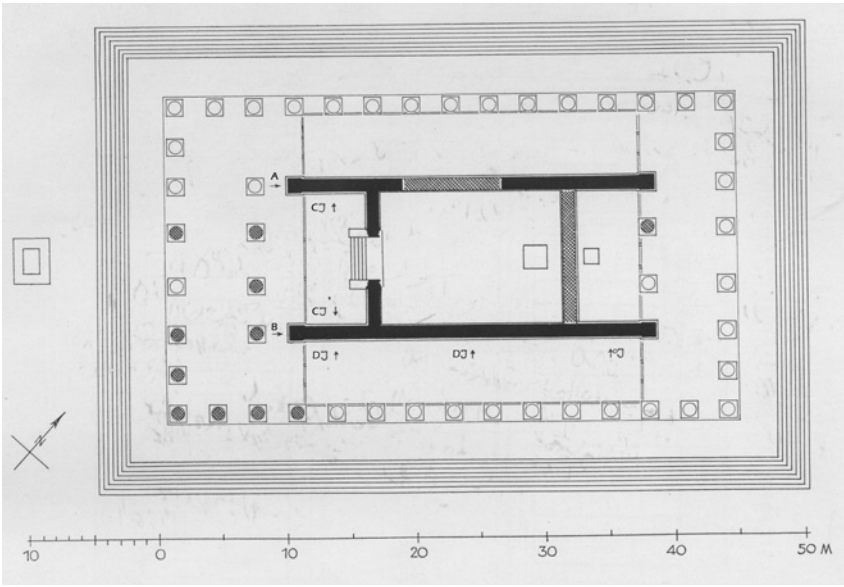


FIGURE 8.1B *Plan of the temple of Roma and Augustus in Ancyra with the distribution of the inscriptions on the temple walls.*
SOURCE: KRENCKER AND SCHEDE (1936) 15, FIG. 10. REPRODUCED BY THE COURTESY OF THE *DEUTSCHES ARCHÄOLOGISCHES INSTITUT*.

only document the temple carries: on the front side of the northern and southern *antae*, two further documents can be found. To the north (A), a long list, composed between 5/4 BCE and 17 CE or soon afterwards and extending over thirteen blocks of marble, mentions the gifts and expenditures of those who served for one year as priest of the imperial cult of the temple, which was the provincial centre of the cult in Galatia. On the south (B), a now very fragmentary text drawn up in the reign of Trajan recalls the promises of several high priests to provide for additional donations during their time in office.[5] In short, in addition to the *Res gestae*, a conspicuous presence of writing can be observed in the entrance area. The *pronaos* of the temple of Roma and Augustus was framed and marked by documents that recounted not only Augustus' interpretation of his accomplishments, but also the expenditures of those who served as priests of the temple and its cult.

Such a conspicuous presence of inscriptions on temple buildings in general and in the area of the *pronaos* in particular seems to be a phenomenon that applies specifically to sanctuaries in Hellenistic and Roman Asia Minor.[6] Both in the coastal regions of Caria and Ionia, and in the more inland regions of Phrygia and Galatia, temples can be found whose walls were inscribed with a variety of official documents, turning them into monumental *Schriftträger*. This 'epigraphic habit' of displaying official documents on temples has long been noticed by scholars, but has not yet been extensively discussed.[7] Hence, this chapter aims to discuss the special significance of the *pronaos* for the public display of official documents and to elaborate on the question what an ancient visitor of a temple actually saw when approaching the entrance, before entering the *cella*.[8] It should be noted that the function of *Schriftträger* was not

5 *I.Ancyra* 2 and 4; Mitchell (2012) 10–14, 138–150, 152–153.

6 On mainland Greece, only the temple of Apollo in Delphi functioned as publication place for inscriptions; to the best of my knowledge, no other examples in the rest of mainland Greece are known. A famous example from Crete is the temple of Apollo Pythios in Gortyn where the earliest group of legal documents was published on the temple walls between 600 and 525 BCE (cf. Davies (2005) 306).

7 Noticed e.g. by Davies (2003) 334–347. Van Bremen (2010) 488 states without further references: 'It is well known that the antae of temples were used for inscribing important documents, and that on them we find the earliest texts'. See also Pedley (2005) 63. The only rather brief study of the phenomenon is Von Hesberg's article of (2009) 20–28, where he concludes that the presentation and the communicative value of documents published on the temple walls depended on highly divergent factors, but that, in general, the readability of the inscriptions was indeed taken into consideration by those who were responsible for their erection.

8 Of the temples discussed in this chapter, the outer walls (besides those of the *pronaos*) of the temples in Aizanoi, Lagina and Magnesia on the Maeander were also covered with

unique to temples: other monumental buildings, such as theatres and *stoai*, were also covered with inscriptions. The so-called 'archive wall' of the theatre at Aphrodisias in Caria is one famous example, but numerous other cases can be found in other regions too.[9] Due to the scope of this article and the overall theme of this volume I will not discuss these so-called 'text monuments'.

In this contribution, I will first analyse the position of the *pronaos* within the sacred space of the Greek sanctuary, asking what characteristics could have led to the publication of official documents here. Secondly, proceeding in chronological order, I will discuss several examples to illustrate not only the contents and character of this kind of documents, but also the visibility and presentation with regard to the inscriptions' spatial context. It has long been recognized that inscriptions, as materialized writing, derive their meaning not solely from their content, but also, or even more so, from the monument on and the spatial context within which they were published.[10] Thirdly, I will offer an interpretation of the significance of the *pronaos* for the publication of documents and address how the presence of inscriptions influenced the perception of the *pronaos* and the temple as a whole. In doing so, I hope to provide a backdrop against which the use of writing at the entrance of the Early Christian church and later cult buildings, discussed elsewhere in this volume, can be interpreted.[11]

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documents. Other examples of inscriptions on outer walls of temples include the temple of Zeus in Labraunda, the temple of Dionysos in Teos, the temple of Zeus in Euromos, the temple of Apollo in Delphi, the temple of Apollo in Klaros and the temple of Kybele in Pessinous.

9 For the archive wall in Aphrodisias, see Reynolds (1982) and, more recently, Kokkinia (2015–2016). Other (well-known) examples include the stoa in Magnesia on the Maeander (Thonemann 2007), the Sacred Stoa in Priene (Von Hesberg (2009) 28–30), and the monument of Opramoas in Rhodiapolis (Kokkinia (2000)). The only examples from mainland Greece, to my knowledge, are the theatre of Sparta, where lists of magistrates were inscribed on the walls of the east and west *parodoi* (Cartledge and Spawforth (1989) 156–157) and the theatre and polygonal terrace wall in Delphi, where an impressive number of manumissions was published (Harter-Uibopuu (2013) 281–294).

10 Noted already by Klaffenbach (1966) 47. More recent discussion of the importance of interpreting inscriptions in their context include Haensch (2009a); Von Hesberg (2009) 19–20; Witschel (2014) 114–116; Eastmond (2015); Debiais (forthcoming).

11 See the contribution of Agosti in this volume (chapter 9).

The Place of the Temple in the Sanctuary Space

Before discussing the publication of inscriptions in the *pronaos*, let me first (since this article is about the *pronaos* of the temple and not the actual entrance into the sanctuary) analyse the position and function of this 'doorway' within the sacred precinct as a whole. Looking at doorways as places of transition separating the worldly from the divine, one may ask what the role of the *pronaos* actually was. As the 'threshold' before the *cella* located within an already sacred space, the *pronaos* was, strictly speaking, not a 'neutral' zone between two territories, but functioned as transition to a space of greater sanctity. Rather than examining the *pronaos* in all its different aspects in the ancient Greek world, I will discuss some general features with specific relevance for the interpretation of documents inscribed in the *pronaos*.

Broadly speaking, Greek sanctuaries on the whole consisted of a sacred precinct, or *temenos*, that was generally marked out by either a surrounding wall or border markers, *horoi*. Sacred laws ensured that the purity of the sanctuary was preserved and pollution was prevented, e.g. by banning death, sexual intercourse, and giving birth within the *temenos*' borders.[12] In general, the entrance consisted of some sort of a gateway, which could acquire a quite monumental appearance, to distinguish the sacred from the non-sacred space, and to emphasize the transition between the two. The cultic centre of the sanctuary was the altar, which was essential for the most important cultic activities and ritual practice, namely sacrifice, the dedication of votive gifts, and prayer. The temple building seems to have been a relatively late development. Its primary role was to house the cult statue and the votive depositories, gradually acquiring the function of treasury.[13] The *cella*, as residence of the sanctuary's cult statue, possessed an important position for ritual and cult too, since the cult statue was essential for practices such as praying or the seeking of *asylia*, the protection offered by sanctuaries to those who had fallen into disfavour or were in trouble.[14] The temple therefore became not merely a monumental background to the ritual activity at the altar, but came to play a role in cultic practices itself. In addition, the area of the sanctuary served as a publication place for various types of documents: civic decrees, honorific decrees, dedicatory inscriptions, sacred laws, and sometimes hymns, oracles or 'praise texts' recording the healing of a patient or the epiphany of a deity. Such inscriptions were put up all over the sanctuary, either on *stelai* and statue bases or on the

12 Burkert (1988) 35–36; Lupu (2005) 9–21; Pedley (2005) 57.

13 Hollinshead (1999) 200 and 214; Mylonopoulos (2014) 326.

14 Sinn (1993) 159–160, with more examples.

walls of different buildings such as *stoai*, treasuries, *androns*, the *temenos* wall or the gateway itself.[15]

One question that is particularly important to understand the presence of inscriptions in the *pronaos* is whether or not access to the *cella* was generally allowed. Although temples never functioned as an assembly point for its religious community, this does not mean that they were never entered by the worshippers. A wide range of literary, archaeological, and epigraphical sources shows that people entered ancient temples on various occasions. The story of the visit of two women to the Asclepieion on Kos in Herodas' fourth *Mime* is well known, as well as Euripides' *Ion* and the travel accounts of Pausanias, which describe several examples of temple access. These sources illustrate that entering the temple was not a rare phenomenon and that prayer before the cult statue was considered normal practice.[16] Another religious practice, of which going into the temple formed part, was the depositing of votive offerings in front of or attached to the cult statue.[17] The archaeological material supports this: the presence of ramps leading into temples, and the screening off of cult statues to protect them from potential damage caused by (many) visitors only makes sense if access to the *cella* was permitted on certain occasions. An interesting archaeological detail from one of the sanctuaries discussed in this chapter is the staircase in the *pronaos* of the temple of Athena in Priene, which leads into the *cella* and seems to have been so worn out by intensive use that it had to be replaced under the reign of Augustus.[18] Accessibility could greatly differ, since some sources show that access was restricted or even forbidden, although this appears to be rather exceptional and to apply to specific

15 The ubiquity of inscriptions in a Greek sanctuary can still be observed in the sanctuary of Apollo at Delphi, where the theatre walls, the treasury of the Athenians, the polygonal terrace wall of the temple and many freestanding exedrai and statue bases were covered with different kinds of inscriptions. A similar example is the sanctuary of Apollo at Klaros. See Parker (2012) 18, who notes that 'there was much to read in any major sanctuary of the classical period', an observation that applies to the Hellenistic and Imperial period as well. It is beyond the scope of this article to discuss the various inscriptions published elsewhere within Greek and Roman sanctuaries. For a study of the ancient practice of erecting (non-religious) epigraphic documents in Greek sanctuaries, see the project at the University of Münster (Germany) on 'Political-religious interdependence in sacred spaces. Epigraphic texts in the context of Greek sanctuaries', supervised by Peter Funke.

16 Herod. 4, Eur. *Ion* 184–228, Paus. 1.24.4–7; 1.26.5–27.1; 5.10.10–11.10; 5.12.4, 8; 5.17.1–3; 2.19.3–7; 10.24.1–5; see Corbett (1970) 150–151; Hollinshead (1999) 208.

17 Steuernagel (2014) 54–59.

18 *I.Priene*^{2} 156; Koenigs (2015) 24 fig. 24, 141. See Sporn (2015) on temple ramps.

sanctuaries.[19] Still, it can be assumed that in general the interior of the temple was visited by worshippers who entered the *cella* to look at the cult statue and pray in front of it as well as depositing (or admiring) votive gifts. This observation is important as it shows that the *pronaos* was regularly frequented by worshippers and that, consequently, the inscriptions published here would have stand a relatively greater chance of being seen or read.

The altar's central role in cult practice and its position directly in front of the temple entrance ensured that the *pronaos* constituted a highly conspicuous background to this focal point of ritual action and movement, as it was situated at the end of a visual line orientated towards the altar. The visual orientation towards the altar and the temple's front was often enhanced by the layout of the sanctuary, since the main gateway was often located opposite the altar and temple.[20] Moreover, the position of the *pronaos* in the direct line of sight from the altar into the *cella* and at the cult statue established a visual relation between altar, *pronaos* and the temple interior. Vitruvius stresses this visual connection by stating that 'Altars should face the east, and should always be placed on a lower level than are the statues in the temples, so that those who pray and sacrifice may look up to the divinity from various levels as becomes each man's god'.[21] This visual axis between altar and cult statue was prominent and focalized the space in front of the temple. This observation should specifically be borne in mind when discussing the suitability of the *pronaos* for publishing important documents.

Of Kings, Citizens and Priests—Documents in the *Pronaos*

The phenomenon of displaying epigraphic writing in the *pronaos* extends over a period of six centuries, from the fourth century BCE to the second century CE, in various regions of Asia Minor. It shows remarkable regional differences both in the number of documents published and in the duration of the practice to display inscriptions in a specific *pronaos*. Before discussing the material, let

19 Corbett (1970) 151 discusses Pausanias on this subject; more examples in Lupu (2005) 18–21; most recently Steuernagel (2014) who also examines the archaeological evidence.

20 For the importance of the visual line from the altar at the front side of the temple, see Sinn (2000) 62–64. Still, several examples exist in which the view from the *propylon* was not towards the front of the temple but towards the flank or rear of the sacred building. Examples include the temple of Athena at Pergamum and the Parthenon in Athens. Cf. Winter (2006) 18.

21 Vitr. *De arch.* 4.9.1: *Arae spectent ad orientem et semper inferioris sint conlocatae quam simulacra, quae fuerint in aede, uti suspicientes divinitatem qui supplicant et sacrificant disparibus altitudinibus ad sui cuiusque dei decorem componantur*. (translation F. Granger)

me note that the epigraphical material is abundant and highly complex. For reasons of space, I will limit myself to some examples with a relatively well preserved archaeological context.[22] This allows for more solid observations on visibility, focalisation and movement. Still, I realize that my approach involves a certain degree of over-generalizing.

The oldest example of the publication of documents in a *pronaos* is the temple of Athena Polias in Priene, the construction of which began in the second half of the fourth century BCE and was not concluded before the reign of Augustus.[23] The conclusion of the first period of construction around 270 BCE saw the core of the building (including the *pronaos*) more or less finished, in such a way that the temple could be used for ritual activities.[24] The area of the *temenos* underwent considerable changes over time, as it was enlarged extensively during later construction periods, when it was provided with a *stoa* on its south side and a monumental gateway on its east side. In the late third or early second century BCE, a monumental altar was built in front of the temple, which shifted the focus from the temple to the space before and around the altar (fig. 8.2).[25]

Probably during or right after the end of the first building phase, documents were carved upon the temple walls, starting at the top of the pillar of the northern *anta* and extending all the way down to its plinth according to the

22 This excludes treatment of the temple of Artemis in Amyzon (letter of Antiochus III and several decrees of the Amyzonians), the temple of Zeus in Labraunda, the Metroon in Sardis (letters), the temple of Eleuthera in Muskar (honorary decree) and the temple of Apollo in Tyberissos (honorary decree and *foedus* with Rome) amongst others. For a general discussion of these inscriptions, see Robert (1983) 97–154 on Amyzon, Rigsby (1996) 292–325 on Teos and Schuler (2007) 55–57 on Tyberissos. The content and type of these *pronaos* inscriptions are similar to the documents discussed in this paper. Interestingly, according to some sources, a few other famous inscriptions were inscribed on the temple walls in Delphi, namely the maxims 'Know thyself' and 'Nothing overmuch' (e.g. Plat. *Charm*. p. 165a; Paus. 10.24; Macr. *Sat*. 1.6.6; Xen. *mem*. 4.2.24). The sources, however, differ with regard to the location of these maxims (*pronaos*, side wall of temple) and the number of maxims inscribed.

23 See Koenigs (2015) 144–156 on the latest study of the construction of the temple and its different phases, a subject which has been hotly debated in the last hundred years.

24 The *crepidoma*, the *cella*, the façade of the east side and the first four columns of the northern and southern long side were finished, see Koenigs (2015) 13.

25 For the arrangement and construction of the *temenos* cf. Hennemeyer (2013), in particular 207–209 and plate 158. The altar was possibly erected on the foundations of an older altar and is dated to the late third or early second century BCE. The buildings on the north side probably belonged to another sanctuary, see Hennemeyer (2013) 195–197.

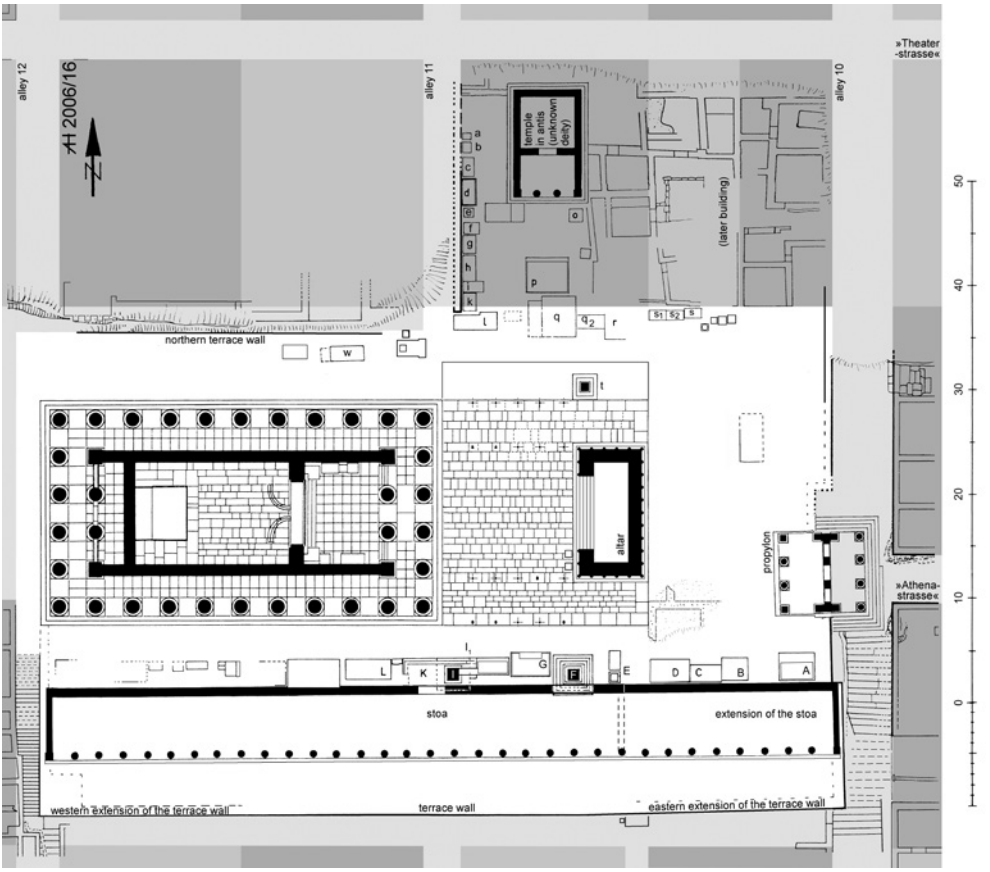


FIGURE 8.2 *Plan of the sanctuary of Athena Polias at the turn of the eras, Priene.* SOURCE: HENNEMEYER (2013) TAF. 2. REPRODUCED BY THE COURTESY OF ARND HENNEMEYER.

reconstruction.[26] The inscriptions continued on the *anta*'s northern exterior wall, where the writing at some places amounted to a width of around four meters. Since the *cella* wall measured circa twelve to thirteen meters in height

26 See for a reconstruction of the arrangement of the inscriptions on the *antae* and northern exterior wall Blümel (2014) plate 184–185. Most of the *antae* blocks are now kept in different museums so that an accurate impression of the height in which these documents were once displayed cannot be made.

and the documents were inscribed starting at the top of the wall, some of the documents must have been barely readable.[27]

On the top part of the pillar, the two most extensively discussed documents are found: a dedication of Alexander the Great to Athena Polias and part of his letter to the citizens of Priene concerning tax regulations and the juridical status of the Prienians as well as of those living in villages nearby.[28] The lower part of the pillar was covered by various documents: a civic decree ordering divine honours to be awarded to king Lysimachos after his support to Priene in wartime, a letter of Lysimachos reporting the acceptance of these honours, and another royal decree, the name of the author of which is lost.[29] The documents on the northern exterior wall mention mainly regulations concerning the boundaries of Priene's land, most of them in relation to the conflict between Samos and Priene.[30] Taken together, this collection of eleven different documents was inscribed between circa 330/20 and circa 135 BCE according to the dating of the documents itself.[31] It came to function as a dossier in which the rights and privileges of Priene were publicly displayed and

27 For the measurements, see Koenigs (2015) 118–120; Von Hesberg (2009) 46 provides an impression of the great height at which the documents were published. An analysis of the ancient epigraphic habit to publish inscriptions at such heights or places that the text was impossible to read is beyond the scope of this contribution.

28 Dedication of Alexander the Great: *I.Priene*^{2} 149 (334–323 BCE); letter of Alexander: *I.Priene*^{2} 1 (334–330 BCE). The content of both documents, their date and reasons for publication as well as their importance for the dating of the temple have been thoroughly discussed by e.g. Sherwin-White (1985), Botermann (1994), Thonemann (2012) and Blümel (2014) 1–4.

29 Civic decree: *I.Priene*^{2} 2 (286/5 BCE); letter of Lysimachos: I.Priene^2 3 (circa 285 BCE); letter of unknown origin: I.Priene^2 4 (first half of third century BCE).

30 *I.Priene*^{2} 132 (196–191 BCE); 11? (circa 156/5 BCE); 12 (before 135 BCE); 133? (196–191 BCE); 134 (135 BCE); 135 (after 135 BCE); *I.Priene*^{2} 132 is the largest document of this dossier and records the arbitration of the Rhodians about the borders that divide the land of Priene and of Samos. It provides such precise details about this border division that, considering the naming of multiple landmarks, it must have been possible to retrace the boundary stones for those who wished to.

31 The date of the creation of the document does not necessarily have to coincide with the date of its publication since various examples exist showing that the time of the erection of the inscription in public was considerably later than the time of its creation. The letter of Alexander is a case in point which, although composed during the king's lifetime, was inscribed together with the decree for Lysimachos circa forty years later, noted by Sherwin-White on the basis of the letter forms. Another example of a later (re)publication is the dossier published on the walls of the temple of Pluto in Nysa on the Maeander, on which see Welles (1934) 54–60, 261–264; see Haensch (2009b) 182 for further examples.

as such was relevant for the city as a whole. This selection of documents has often been termed 'city archive', but, according to my opinion, this definition cannot be maintained, since the term 'archive' suggests a systematic maintenance of the city's official records. The fact that the inscriptions on the temple walls in Priene are clearly the result of a selection, and relate to one particular theme, suggests that this assemblage of documents should rather be defined as 'dossier'.[32] When considering the placement of these documents in relation to the *pronaos*, one has to conclude that only the writing on the front side of the *anta*'s pillar was visual connected to the entrance of the temple. Here, the oldest documents were published in chronological order. When the front side was completely filled, publication continued on the northern exterior wall. In this respect, as will be shown, Priene is unique, since the inner sides of the *antae* were normally the preferred place for publication.

Our next example, the temple of Athena in Herakleia under Latmos belongs to roughly the same period as the temple in Priene. It is a relatively simple structure with only two columns in antis and was constructed in the third century BCE to the west of the city's agora (fig. 8.3).[33] The *cella*, made of local gneiss, still stands upright and among the *anta* blocks scattered around the building eight blocks carrying inscriptions were found. The following is mainly based on Michael Wörrle's reconstruction of the arrangement of the documents on the walls of the *pronaos*.[34]

On the northern *anta* two documents dated between 196 and 193 BCE were carved at a height of circa 3.5 meters above the ground. The first is a letter of Antiochus III to the city of Herakleia, in which the king confirms that he accepted the honours offered to him by the city. In return, Antiochus awards

32 The term 'city archive' for these kind of inscription dossiers was coined by Reynolds (1982) for the inscriptions on the theatre wall in Aphrodisias, then adopted by Sherwin-White (1985), who states that the creation of the archive can 'be regarded as a public act in that it required authorisation by the civic assembly of the polis and to this extent therefore represented the policy of the civic community' (74). The difference between archive and dossier is discussed by Davies (2003), whose distinction between the both of them I follow here. Cf. Chaniotis (2004) 142 with similar objections to the definition of the collection of documents on the parodos wall of Aphrodisias' theatre as 'archive wall' and Vandorpe (2009) 217–219 for a slightly different use of both terms within the field of papyrology.

33 Peschlow-Bindokat (2005) 32–33, 113–117. Herakleia is a Carian city that originally positioned on the Latmian Gulf but now, due to the soil deposition of the Maeander, lies on Lake Bafa.

34 Wörrle (1988) 421–422, 426–428 and Wörrle (1990), 19–23; Peschlow-Bindokat (2005) 113–115. It remains uncertain whether the existence of additional *antae* blocks with inscriptions can be excluded.



FIGURE 8.3 *The temple of Athena Latmia in Herakleia seen from the north-east.* PHOTO: E.J.J. ROELS.

the city further privileges like an additional three-year payment of the water pipes.[35] The royal letter is followed by a comparable, but considerably longer reply to Herakleia written by one of Antiochus' most important associates, Zeuxis.[36] Although it is inscribed beneath the letter of Antiochus, this document is earlier in date and relates the reaction of Zeuxis to the request from the people of Herakleia to keep their former privileges and rights.[37] Both letters belong in the context of the wars Antiochus fought in Asia Minor in the first

35 *SEG* 37, 859A; Wörrle (1990) 422–426, with translation.

36 On Zeuxis, see Ma (1999) 125–130.

37 *SEG* 37, 859B–D; Wörrle (1990) 422–426, with translation. This phenomenon of publishing a document of higher value, or originating from the highest authority, on top or on the most prominent place can also be observed in the dossier with the honours for Eurykles on the temple walls in Aizanoi, where the letter of emperor Antoninus Pius is published on the most visible, outer side of the temple wall in clearly larger letters (*OGIS* 506; Naumann (1979) 36).

decade of the second century BCE and are the result of Herakleia joining the side of the Seleucid king.[38]

While these two documents belong to one specific event, the inscriptions on the front side of the southern *anta* show a more varied character. At around the same height as Antiochus' the letter of Lucius Cornelius Scipio (the Roman consul) and his brother Publius Scipio addressed to the people of Herakleia was inscribed on the *anta*.[39] The letter is to be dated shortly before the battle at Magnesia on the Sipylos (190 BCE) and mentions Herakleia's recovery of freedom as a reward for her support of Rome during the war against Antiochus. The three letters in the *pronaos* therefore reflect various stages in Herakleia's alliance with the different powers who fought each other during the 190s on the west coast of Asia Minor.

While these letters can be identified as political in character and concern the city of Herakleia as a whole, the other documents on the southern *anta* specifically relate to the cult of Athena Latmia. On the block immediately beneath the letter of the *Scipiones*, an oracle of Apollo is inscribed, in response to the question of the city of Herakleia, whether the priesthood of Athena should be sold or not. The answer was negative, since the oracle is followed by a list of names of those who were chosen to serve as priest of Athena for one year. The list extends over two blocks on the front side and at least another three blocks on the outside.[40] On prosopographical grounds the oracle and the priest lists can be dated between the first quarter of the first century BCE and the reign of Augustus. There was thus a considerable time gap between the inscribing of Scipio's letter and the oracle.[41]

The most striking feature of the documents in the *pronaos* of the temple of Athena is the change of character these documents showed over time. The temple walls were at first used for documents that publicized the bestowal and confirmation of various rights and privileges by different powers, resulting from Herakleia's skilful courtship of different authorities. In the first century BCE, then, the temple walls presented the rulings of Apollo's oracle regarding the priesthoods organisation as well as the names of those citizens who were

38 Marek (2010) 284–288.

39 *SIG*^{3} 618; Sherk (1984) n. 14, with translation.

40 *SEG* 40, 956; Wörrle (1990) 26. Three blocks between the third and the fourth row are missing so that the list of names must have been considerably longer.

41 Wörrle (1990) 29. Unfortunately, Wörrle does not discuss whether the priest list was inscribed at one single moment or was constantly updated. Given the impression of Wörrle's photographs, showing a consistent layout of the text and a similar script in the entire inscription, I would argue that the entire list was inscribed in one go.

chosen to serve as priest. The priest lists turned these walls into a conspicuous place of self-representation, since the priesthood formed one of the most important offices of the city, accessible solely to the most distinguished families and their members.[42]

The same typological mixture of documents related to political alliances and cult practice can be found in the temple of Hecate in Lagina, a rural sanctuary in Caria that developed into the main cultic centre of the city of Stratonikeia.[43] The temple was located right next to the centre of the *temenos*, which was surrounded on all four sides by *stoai* and featured a row of seats looking towards the south side of the temple on the southwest side (fig. 8.4).[44] The amount of text inscribed on the temple walls is impressive: the priest lists alone account for more than 130 entries in the epigraphical corpus of Stratonikeia. But the reconstruction of the temple walls, and hence the placement of the documents, is much more complicated than in Priene, since the temple is poorly preserved and parts of the building material have disappeared. The attribution of eighteen blocks with inscriptions to the *pronaos* is based on their measurements, as the *anta* blocks are clearly wider (circa 72 cm) than those of the *cella* wall (between forty and fifty centimetres); the question of the arrangement of the inscriptions on the wall, however, must be left open.[45]

The largest document published on the front side of the pillar of the *pronaos* is a decree of the council and the people of Stratonikeia in honour of the goddess Hecate. They thank the deity for saving the Stratonikeians from danger and punishing those who committed an impious crime by ravaging the sacred land of the sanctuary.[46] This decree was published on the narrow side of two different *anta* blocks, of which the lower one carries another inscription, a priest list (*I.Stratonikeia* 607 and 636), on its long side. The fragmentary state of the inscription makes dating and interpreting its content difficult. Scholars have interpreted the document as referring to the wars and plundering of

42 Wörrle (1990) 26–29.

43 For this development cf. Williamson (2012) 239–242. The sanctuary of Hecate was located on the north eastern slope of mount Akdağ at a distance of circa eight km from the city of Stratonikeia.

44 Tırpan (2012) 182–183, with plan of the sanctuary; Williamson (2012) 248–250.

45 The following is mainly based on the excellent study of Riet van Bremen (2010), who has assembled the *antae* blocks. Cf. van Bremen (2010) 488–490 for the measurements of the blocks.

46 *I.Stratonikeia* 512a and b. The blocks are however lost, only a few descriptions and sketches remain; see van Bremen (2010) 495–496 for the discussion.

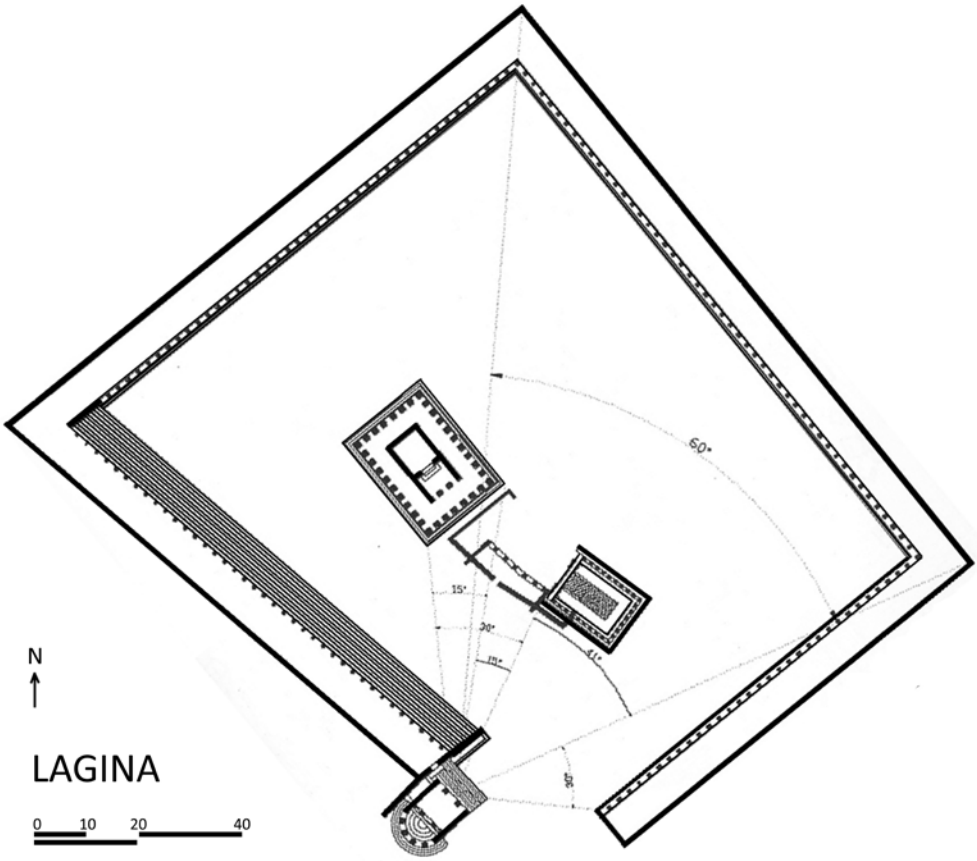


FIGURE 8.4 *Plan of the sanctuary of Hecate in Lagina; the temple is situated near the centre.* SOURCE: TIRPAN (2012) 182, FIG. 1. REPRODUCED BY THE COURTESY OF AHMET TIRPAN.

Aristonicus (circa 135 BCE) or Mithridates (80s BCE).[47] Solving this problem is not the first priority for the current chapter; it is more important to note that it concerns a civic decree issued by the city of Stratonikeia and published on the temple building to honour the civic deity and testify to the intervention of the goddess on behalf of the city.

With one exception, all other documents in the *pronaos* contain lists of priests mentioning the names of those who served as priest of Hecate, sometimes also

47 For the historical context, see most recently van Bremen (2010) 499–502; Tarpın (2012) 198–199.

listing expenses made during their office.[48] All lists are carved on the long side of the *anta* blocks, which means that they were inscribed in the interior of the *pronaos* or on the exterior of the side wall, but not on the front side of the *anta* walls. The exception is the dedication of a certain Manilius, that was inscribed on the narrow side of an *anta* block not until the first century BCE, who presented the goddess with a gift of cult garments.[49] The priest lists formed the most substantial part of the documents in the *pronaos*, the number of which seems to have grown organically over time without any organizing principle, and to have continued on the exterior walls in a random arrangement.[50] Contrary to these, both documents which also related directly to the cult of the goddess and her veneration, the honorary decree for Hecate and the dedication, were presented (more?) prominently on the front side. Impressive though this textual quantity may be, the historically most interesting documents were published on the south wall of the *cella*, that is, Stratonikeia's famous dossier dealing with the *asylia* status of the sanctuary and its acceptance by different cities.[51] The temple of Hecate can therefore been defined as Stratonikeia's city dossier,[52] since, just as with the Athena temple in Priene, the documents published on the temple walls as a whole concerned the rights and privileges of the city and their recognition by other cities.

The following two examples, the temples of Ancyra and Aizanoi, belong to a slightly later period. They are an indication of the continuation of this phenomenon until the second century CE. As already discussed, the temple of Roma and Augustus in Ancyra, the imperial cult temple of the provincial capital of Galatia, does not only carry the *Res gestae*, but also a relatively elaborate priest list.[53] The persons appearing in these lists include several figures who belonged to the most prominent families of Galatia; the list testifies to the benefactions they made during their priesthood, which was one of their responsibilities. As such, the lists simultaneously reflect the fulfilment of religious obligations and the acquirement of a prestigious office. The priest lists stand in a direct relation to the *Res gestae*, as the former names the priests of

48 Van Bremen (2010) mentions the following: *I.Stratonikeia* 520, 601–607, 609 ll. 18–25, 611–613, 626, 627, 633, 636, 652, 657, 660 ll. 9–12, 670, 695a, 717.

49 *I.Stratonikeia* 514; van Bremen (2010) 490–491.

50 Van Bremen (2010) 488. These inscriptions are difficult to date precisely, but the majority seems to belong in the first centuries BCE and CE.

51 *I.Stratonikeia* 505, 507, 508. This is a collection of three documents: a letter of Sulla citing several senatorial decrees, a decree of the people of Stratonikeia to announce the *asylia* and a long list of cities who had accepted this *asylia*, see Rigsby (1996) 419–422.

52 *In pace* Williamson (2012) 263.

53 *I.Ancyra* 2 and 4.

the imperial cult, which also formed the context for the publication of the latter. The inscriptions in the *pronaos* therefore refer to the cultic function of the building, although the strong political connotation is not to be missed.

The temple of Zeus in Aizanoi, a Phrygian city to the west of Ancyra, offers the youngest example of the phenomenon. The pseudodipteral temple dedicated in 92 CE is located in the middle of a court surrounded by *stoai* on the north, south and west sides and on the east side by an elaborate gateway.[54] Its most distinct feature, still visible today, is the presence of a horizontally outlined framework on the exterior walls of the *cella* that encircles the whole remaining temple building (fig. 8.5).[55] Within this framework a total number of eight inscriptions can be found: four on the inner side of the northern sidewall of the *pronaos* and the other four on the outside, so that both dossiers of inscriptions were, in a way, located at each other's backside (see fig. 8.6).[56]

The documents in the *pronaos* (A–D) deal with a conflict about the sacred land of the temple of Zeus and were composed in the year 125/6 CE.[57] It appears that the sanctuary of Zeus once received a donation of lands from Attalos I and Prusias I, which were thereafter divided into smaller plots (*kleroi*), and that a payment for their rent was levied. After some time, the rent apparently ceased to be paid and uncertainty about the original measures of the plots arose. Being consulted by the proconsul, emperor Hadrian took care that the allotment of the sacred land was restored and the payment of the taxes reinstated. Still, many of the exact implications and dealings of the dossier remain unclear since the new regulations about the size of the land plots and

54 This precise dating is based on the preserved building dedication that was inscribed on the architrave and the text of which is reconstructed by R. Posamentir and M. Wörrle in their 2006 article. Before the deciphering of the building inscription the temple was usually dated around the years 120–156 on the evidence of the inscriptions on the temple wall. Cf. Naumann (1971) 36 and 68.

55 Although the southern *cella* wall of the temple has not been entirely preserved, it can nonetheless be assumed that the framework carried on on the south side also. Then a small part of the southern wall on the east has been preserved that shows traces of the presence of this framework, see Naumann (1979) plate 45.

56 Naumann (1979) 34–35.

57 First edition of the inscriptions with commentary in Laffi (1971). Further discussion in *MAMA* IX xxxvi–xliii; Dignas (2002) 178–188 and Nörr (2012). The dossier on the outside of the northern anta (E-H) touches upon quite a different subject and relates to the merits of one individual, M. Ulpius Appuleianus Eurycles, one of the most important citizens of Aizanoi, cf. Wörrle (2009).



FIGURE 8.5 *The remains of the* cella *of the temple of Zeus in Aizanoi seen from the east: the horizontally outlined framework on the northern wall of the* pronaos *with the dossier of letters is clearly visible on the right.*
PHOTO: E.J.J. ROELS.

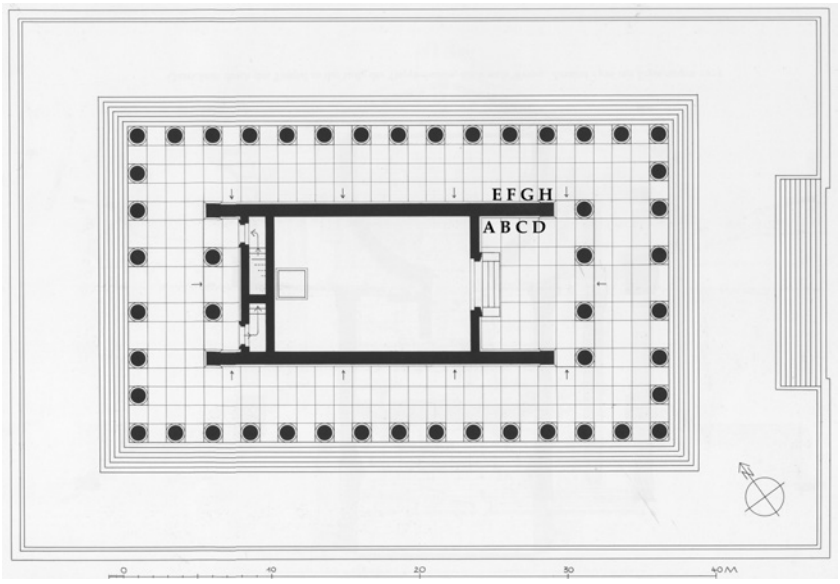


FIGURE 8.6 *Plan of the temple of Zeus in Aizanoi. A-D are the documents of the temple land dossier. Naumann (1979) Taf. 9.*
REPRODUCED BY THE COURTESY OF THE *DEUTSCHES ARCHÄOLOGISCHES INSTITUT*.

the precise sum of taxes that had to be paid were not included.[58] The reason for the publication of these documents in the sanctuary is self-evident, since they show that the emperor and proconsul had taken measures to lay down the sanctuary's boundaries.

Far more fragmentary is the evidence for the publication of inscriptions in the *pronaos* of the temple of Apollo Termintheus in the Ionian city of Myous. This city had to be abandoned after its harbour had degenerated and subsequently came under the authority of nearby Miletos. This apparently resulted in the displacement of several blocks of stone from Myous to Miletos in order to be used as building material: the only *anta* block preserved, containing two documents, was found in the retaining wall of the east *parodos* of the Milesian theatre.[59] Its original position could be deduced from the text of one of the two documents, which stated that 'it is to be published on the *parastades* of the temple of Apollo Termintheus'.[60]

Both documents are quite fragmentary, but their overall message can be reconstructed with some certainty. On the block's front side, part of an honorary decree from Myous written at the end of the third century BCE was engraved, honouring a man named Apollodoros for his beneficence in general and his dedication of four *phiales* to Apollo in particular.[61] The text on the left side of the block is the latter part of a decree concerning regulations and other provisions for the cult of the divine Eumenes, the second Attalid king of this name.[62] The decree is to be dated either in 164/5 BCE or after 159 BCE and explicitly states that it must be inscribed on the *parastades* of the temple and on the statue base of the king. Although it is striking that arrangements for the cult of Eumenes were laid down in the *pronaos*, the relation between this cult and the temple of Apollo is uncertain, since little else is known about this temple.[63]

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58 One of the hotly debated questions surrounding this dossier concerns the beneficiary of the rent; according to Laffi (1971) 25–29 and Dignas (2002) 92–94 it was the priestly dynasty; according to Wörrle (2009) 428–429 the city of Aizanoi.

59 For the discovery of the *anta* block in the Milesian theatre: Hermann (1965) 90; for a discussion of the joining of Myous with Miletos: Mackil (2004) 494–497. Strabo (14.1.10) and Pausanias (7.2.11) both mention the abandonment of the city, although their accounts differ slightly in the reasons they give for the decision of the Myousians.

60 *SEG* 36, 1048 ll. 7–9: ἀναγραφῆ δὲ καὶ τόδε τὸ ψήφισμα εἴς τε τὸ βῆ[μα ἐφ᾽ οὗ]/ σταθήσεται ἡ τοῦ βασιλέως εἰκὼν καὶ εἰς τὴν παραστάδα τοῦ ναοῦ[τοῦ Ἀπόλλω-]/νος το[ῦ Τ]ερμινθέως· Hermann (1965) 90–97.

61 *SEG* 36, 1047; Hermann (1965) 91–93, with German translation.

62 *SEG* 36, 1048; Hermann (1965) 96–103, with German translation.

63 A fact that does not need to surprise us, as very little of ancient Myous is left at all. According to the excavations carried out in the sixties, the temple of Apollo was an Ionian

The documents in the *pronaos* discussed above show a large variety in content and subject, but are similar in not referring to any cult regulations or sacred laws (*leges sacrae*), as one might expect to find on a temple building.[64] Neither do they possess an overall religious character in the sense that they testify to the veneration of the gods as the documents that can be encountered at the entrance of Christian churches. In the case of *pronaos* inscriptions, we are not dealing with hybrid 'paratexts' that guided the interpretation of the sacred building (see the Introduction to the present volume), but with documents that, as far as we can tell, were not even related to it. The decree displayed on the *anta* front side in the temple of Hecate at Lagina is in this respect exceptional, as the assistance of Hecate and her *enargeia* are praised and elaborated on. But this decree is just so much, or even more so, concerned with demonstrating Stratonikeia's recovering of her freedom and autonomy. On the whole, *pronaos* documents bear a more civic character as they are for the most part decrees of the city or letters addressed to the civic community, or documents that reflect the standing of the aristocrats that fulfilled the office of priest for a certain period of time (the priest lists of Ancyra, Lagina and Herakleia). The only example of a *pronaos* document specifically referring to cult practice can be found in the temple of Zeus Sosipolis on the agora in Magnesia on the Maeander, where an elaborate civic decree on cult regulations from the first half of the second century BCE was published.[65] The decree was inscribed on the north western *anta* wall and belongs to the category of *leges sacrae*, since it lays down the rules for the veneration of the gods: prescriptions are made for sacrifices, processions, prayers and the erection of a *tholos* on the agora. It concludes with the order to inscribe this decree on the sidewalls of the *pronaos* and a statement that the expenditures are to be covered by revenues of the taxes.[66]

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pseudodipteros built in the Late Archaic period and was situated at the top of the terrace on the northern edge of the peninsula. See Weber (1967) 140 and Bol (2009) 146–148.

64 For a definition of sacred laws, I follow Lupu (2005) 5–6, who considers documents sacred laws if they are prescriptive in character and their subject matter pertains to religion and cult practice.

65 *I.Magnesia* 98. The temple of Zeus was situated in the southern part of the agora and is directed westwards, towards the altar in front of it. See Humann (1904) 141–161; Bingöl (2007) 109–113.

66 *I.Magnesia* 98 ll. 64–67: τὸ δὲ ψήφισμα τόδε ἀναγρά/ψαι τοὺς οἰκονόμους εἰς τὸ ἱερὸν τοῦ Διὸς εἰς τὴν παραστά/δα, ἀναλισκέτωσαν δὲ εἰς ταῦτα πάντα τὰ γεγραμμένα οἱ [οἰ]/κονόμοι ἐκ τῶν πόρων ὧν ἔχουσιν εἰς πόλεως διο[ίκησιν]. Among the arrangements were e.g. the sacrifice of an ox for Zeus during the yearly festivities in the month Heraion and accompanying prayers, another sacrifice and processions in honour of the goddess Artemis

The *lex sacra* in the *pronaos* in Magnesia on the Maeander is an exception since, as could be argued, the overwhelmingly majority of inscriptions published in the *pronaos* show a remarkable heterogeneity when it comes to the nature of the documents.

Civic Dossiers on the Entrance to the God's Dwellings

The analysis of writing published in the *pronaos* makes clear that a large variety of documents was displayed in the entrance to the *cella* and that this phenomenon can be observed solely during the Hellenistic and Imperial period. I want to stress here that the inscriptions carved on the *pronaos* walls constituted only a very small percentage of all texts that were put on display in the ancient Greek city. Most of the inscriptions that have survived were published on *stelai* or statue bases. I can not give an overview of all publication places and their frequency of use for displaying inscriptions here. It should, however, be emphasized and be borne in mind that, in the case of *pronaos* and temple inscriptions, we are dealing with a very small corpus. Most ancient temples were never used as publication medium in antiquity besides, of course, the building inscription.

So let me now return to the question what the visitor of these sanctuaries actually saw upon approaching a temple. How, on the one hand, did the *pronaos* as a publication place influence the perception and reception of the documents displayed in this specific area? And what, on the other hand, was the effect of the presence of the documents on the character of the *pronaos* in particular and the temple in general?

Considering the content and the type of documents published in the *pronaos*, the first thing that attracts attention is, besides their very diverse character, the predominance of letters. The temple of Athena in Priene displayed letters from Alexander the Great and Lysimachos; the one in Aizanoi showcased the letters of Hadrian and the proconsul of Asia in the *pronaos*; and the temple in Herakleia even boasted three letters from important political protagonists of the time (comparable to this category are the *Res gestae divi Augusti*, which were also written by a ruler). The common feature of these documents is that they bear witness to the confirmation or establishment of rules, regulations, and privileges for the city, while simultaneously advertising

Leukophryene in the month Artemision, sacrifices for Apollo and the distribution of the sacrificial meat. In other words, this document was not only concerned with the cult of Zeus, but also with that of Artemis Leukophryene and Apollo.

each city's good relations with the ruler. As such, they were vital elements in the construction of civic memory and identity of the city that chose to publish them. Interestingly, the extent to which these letters actually pertained to their medium of publication, the temple, differs. The dossier of letters in Aizanoi was concerned with the imperial rulings on the boundaries of the sacred land and the taxes to be levied, and therefore related directly to their surroundings, the temple and its land.[67] Furthermore, the beneficiary in this case still appears to be the city itself, since the formula of the documents on the *pronaos* and the boundary stones referring to this ruling both name the city as the party concerned.[68] This bearing on the position of the whole civic community can also be detected in the letters to Priene (status of its citizens and the establishment of its boundaries) and Herakleia (privileges and tax remissions), publicly proclaiming the interference of higher authorities. The fact that these temples all functioned as the main civic sanctuary must have played an important role in choosing these specific temples as location for publication.[69]

A second category of documents consists of civic decrees that are also in some way related to the cult or the venerated deity. This is the case in the temple of Hecate in Lagina, where the efficiency of the goddess and her care for the city of Stratonikeia were invoked in an honorary decree. The same applies to the inscriptions of the *pronaos* of Apollo's temple in Myous, since they mention regulations for the priesthood of Eumenes II and the honours for a man who has benefitted city and god alike. Comparable to these is the quotation of the oracle in Herakleia which determines that the priesthood should be sold every year. A final category is formed by priest lists, such as those published in the *pronaos* in Lagina, Herakleia, and Ancyra, and for which the preferred place of publication in the last two cities seems to have been the front side of the sidewall pillar. For the priests, the temple apparently served as the most obvious place to eternalize their term of office and name on the walls. In Herakleia and Ancyra the foundation or beginnings of the yearly priesthood and the subsequent inscribing of names can still be traced, sometimes expanded with the mention of expenditures made.

It is fascinating that all these documents do not really fit into the category of sacred laws. The only exception is the inscription in the *pronaos* of the temple

67 It should be admitted that the letters testified thát Hadrian and the proconsul had ruled in this conflict, but do not mention whát these new rules stipulated.

68 Laffi (1971) doc. E; see Dignas (2002) 85–94 on the *horoi*; Wörrle (2009) 428.

69 As is the case in Priene (Koenigs (2015) 7), in Lagina (Williamson (2012) 239) and in Herakleia (Peschlow-Bindokat (2005) 113–114); less clear is the position of Zeus' sanctuary in Aizanoi, because of the importance of the cult for Meter Steunene there (Ateş (2010) 55).

of Zeus Sosipolis in Magnesia. This can partially be explained by the fact that, in this case, the *pronaos* did not function as an outer boundary between sacred and non-sacred space, but formed an inner boundary between the *cella*'s interior and the space outside. Documents concerning regulations for ritual purity or the protection of the sanctuary's sacredness can be found in the actual entrance into the *temenos*, e.g. on or near the monumental gateway or on boundary markers.[70] The fact that a sacred law is found in the *pronaos* of the temple of Zeus in Magnesia may be explained by the fact that this temple was not located inside a wider sacred area but on the agora, so that only here any regulations concerning the cult would necessarily have to be published right at the entrance.

A preference to put up civic inscriptions inside a sanctuary has long been explained with the argument that the sanctity of the area, the dwelling of the gods and therefore inviolable, protected the documents and guaranteed the inviolability of their regulations.[71] This neatly explains the wish to publish important documents within the boundaries of a sanctuary, but does not provide an explanation for the fact that they were inscribed on the temple walls instead of freestanding *stelai*.[72] Lalonde has suggested in his 1971 dissertation that the publication of inscriptions on buildings can be explained by economical reasons, since inscribing texts on buildings was far cheaper than the production of new slabs of stone. Moreover, in this way, a lot of space could be saved, which would otherwise have congested sanctuaries like Delphi, already crowded with stone monuments.[73] Von Hesberg has rightly criticized this rather simplistic

70 See Lupu (2005) 14–30 for a discussion of this kind of documents. Such a situation can be observed in Lagina, where the monumental gateway was inscribed with documents, although, as far as can be observed, none concerns sacred regulation of the kind, but rather honorary inscriptions for priests (e.g. *I.Stratonikeia* 1429, 1432, 1439, 1448, 1454) and an Hellenistic decree (*I.Stratonikeia* 1423), as well as a dedication of emperor Augustus (*I.Stratonikeia* 511). One of the *leges sacrae* that has been found was put up, according to its own statement, 'at that place in the sanctuary wherever the archontes would decide (*I.Stratonikeia* 513, ll. 56–57: Τὴν δὲ ἀ[ναγρα|φὴ]ν τοῦδε τοῦ προσγράμματος γενέσθαι ἐν τῶι ὅπου ἂν οἱ ἄρχοντες δοκιμάσω[σιν]).

71 Bengtson (1974) 215–217; Davies (2003) 337.

72 The largest contrast is provided by the Athenian Acropolis as publication area for a huge quantity of *stelai*, which, in the words of P.J. Rhodes (2001) 36 'will have looked like a cemetery, with *stelai* set up wherever there was room'.

73 Lalonde (1971) 61–63. An important argument against Lalonde's thesis is that in general existing buildings in the main Hellenistic sanctuaries like Olympia, Delos and Delphi were never used as publication place. The only exception is the group of slave emissions from Delphi, that were inscribed on the temple's terrace wall and on the walls, pilasters,

explanation.[74] In my opinion, an examination of documents published in the *pronaos* or on the temple's walls shows that this was one of the places for some cities to publish very valuable and important documents. The understanding of the temple in antiquity as the dwelling of the gods stresses this interpretation.[75] Apart from being a highly valued publication place, the temple, because of its enduring character, must have been considered a far more secure publication place than freestanding blocks of marble, which stood a greater risk of being cleared away. Nevertheless, a quick look into the collection of royal Hellenistic correspondence by C.B. Welles shows that letters from kings were very frequently published on *stelai* as well. How the number of royal letters on *stelai* relates to the number of those that were published on temples or other buildings has not been studied yet.[76]

In all the examples discussed here, the documents in the *pronaos* constitute the oldest among those published on the temple walls.[77] Consequently, the *pronaos* can be seen as the (first) preferred place of publication. This can be explained by the arrangement of the *pronaos*' surroundings, since the altar was located in front of the *pronaos* and the main cultic activities took place there. Furthermore, the *pronaos* was intersected with the visual axis between the altar and the cult statue in the *cella*, the viewing of which formed part of ritual praxis.[78] Thus, apart from the altar, it was the most visible, looked at and visited area within the sacred precinct. Accordingly, the inscriptions published here were likely to have been the most effective in terms of communication. By virtue of its location, the *pronaos* was, so to say, one of the *epiphanestatoi* or *episemotatoi topoi*, in the sanctuary, to adopt the terms used in some inscriptions to denote the place of publication guaranteeing the highest degree of visibility and communicative effect.[79]

On the other hand, the presence of these documents in the *pronaos* also affected the character of the temple building itself in a reciprocal interaction. The temple did not serve an exclusively religious function, but—as the inscriptions show—also played an important, more worldly role in propagating the

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and terrace in the theatre, but this seems to be a rather singular category, see Harter-Uibopuu (2013) 281–285.

74 Von Hesberg (2009) 27 n. 33.

75 Hollinshead (1999) 214; Mylonopoulos (2014) 330.

76 A recent, excellent study by Bencivenni (2014) discusses Hellenistic royal letters in inscriptions extensively but does not discuss the different publication places of these epigraphic letters.

77 With the possible exception of Apollo's temple in Myous, of which only one *anta* block has been found.

78 See above.

79 Cf. Chaniotis (2004) 143–144 for some examples.

privileges and rights of the city, in showing the decrees issued by the council concerning the city's government and in eternalizing the names of those who had served as priests of the temple and its cult. Such dossiers of inscriptions were the result of careful selection. They presented a collection that the civic community wanted to keep present in the city as a reminder of past achievements for the future. The publication of letters or civic decrees, however, was no regular practice, nor was it necessary to validate a decree. In general, letters received and decrees issued were kept in the city's archive, unless the city or an individual took the initiative to publish the document in stone.[80] Consequently, the letters and decrees that survive today are those that the city which undertook their publication wanted to preserve and convey to future generations.

An interesting aspect related to the practice of selection is the composition of dossiers in the *pronaos*. It is here that we find multiple documents that apparently were deemed fit to be shown together. While the dossiers from Ancyra and Aizanoi are concerned with only one subject, others show sometimes even conflicting positions. The city of Herakleia under Latmos, for example, did not see any problems in publishing in the *pronaos* its successive alliances with two historical opponents, Antiochus III and Rome. One may wonder how these dossiers were seen and understood by the ancient visitor to the temple or sanctuary. Most of the *pronaos* inscriptions seem to have been erected at one given moment,[81] after which they were probably subjected to some kind of 'musealisation' over time, making them into prestige objects meant to impress the visitor. An impression of the way in which these documents could be perceived may be gained from Herodas' description of the visit of two women to the temple of Asclepius and their admiration of the objects kept there. One could imagine a reaction to the royal or imperial letters similar to those described by Herodas: 'Look, there is the letter of king Antiochus!'[82]

Just as important as the question what was carved on the *pronaos* wall, is the question what was not published there but elsewhere. It turns out that only a very small proportion was published on the temple. To take the example of Ancyra, the inscriptions published in Stephen Mitchell's corpus of Ancyra show that all other inscriptions were erected throughout the city. One document that bore relevance to the imperial cult, for example, similar to the ones

80 See Corcoran (2014) 177–179, 206–209 and Witschel (2011) 58–65. For ancient archives, see e.g. Faraguna (2005) and Harter-Uibopuu (2013).

81 The only exception to this publication practice are the priest' names in the temple of Hecate in Lagina, that were continuously added to the wall.

82 *Herod.* 4.

on the temple was carved on a *stele*.[83] Another example comes from the city of Aizanoi where, besides the letters on the temple walls, a small number of letters from several emperors, published elsewhere, has survived. The documents, amongst which a letter of emperor Nero, seem to concern one individual and his family specifically and, according to one scholar, came from the family tomb of the letter's addressee.[84]

Unfortunately, we do not possess any ancient reflections on ideas about the durability and safety of particular publication places.[85] Hence, it is impossible to reconstruct the precise ancient perception or to answer the question whether *pronaos* inscriptions were perceived as more valuable than the ones published on *stelai*. Still, I would argue that the documents in the *pronaos* and the temple in general had a special place in the construction of the city's memory and identity. For sure, they were published on a monument that was more likely to survive (and ensure the continuous visibility and presence of the documents published there) than freestanding *stelai*.

Finally, when we turn to the use of the temple, it can be concluded that its function as a dossier correlates well with the economic role of the temple in safeguarding the treasuries of the deity and sometimes functioning as a museum.[86] An examination of the documents inscribed on the temple walls highlights the combination of different functions the ancient temple could serve in certain cities, a notion which might strike the modern observer as odd.

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83 *I.Ancyra* 8 (cult honours from an association for Antoninus Pius) was found built into the wall in the courtyard of a house; its original location is unknown. For statue bases that carried decrees (but with an honorary purpose), see e.g. *I.Ancyra* 128.

84 Jones (2000) 457. Wörrle (2014) 470, however, in his new edition of the text, states that nothing confirms or leads in this direction. He proposes one of the buildings belonging to an early imperial extension of the city centre of Aizanoi as the inscription's original location, albeit admitting that a funerary context can not be excluded for certain. As Nero's letter was published together with at least two other imperial letters I am inclined to follow the thesis of Jones since we posses several other examples (all belong to the second century CE) where collections of letters were published. The exact location of the other inscriptions in the ancient city of Aizanoi is difficult to reconstruct as many inscriptions were used as building material for the modern town of Çavdarhisar.

85 For instance, an inscription from the temple in the Metroon at Sardis preserves a decree (*SEG* 39.1284) that precedes a letter of queen Laodike and king Antiochus III, stating that the letter written by the queen should be put up on the *parastas* of the temple. However, nothing is said about the reasons for choosing this specific publication place. See the short commentary of Ma (1999) 286–287.

86 Hollinshead (1999) is fundamental for the economical role of temples and argues that this economic role had little to do with ritual. On the temple as museum, see Shaya (2005) 436–437.

The idea of sanctity in antiquity did not exclude 'profane' documents from sacred space. In fact, the deity and its cult could have even been entirely absent from these documents on the temple walls. In this respect, ancient *pronaos* inscriptions differ remarkably from inscriptions found on Christian churches, since they did not necessarily champion the religious nature of the building, nor did they celebrate the deity honoured by it. Neither did they prepare the visitor for what he or she was to encounter in the *cella*. Even though explicit references to the religious function of the building were generally absent from *pronaos* inscriptions, it was nonetheless the sanctity of the temple that motivated their publication there. Their visibility, namely, was an essential concern in the publication of these records, as was the material survival that would ensure a lasting memory of the events and/or persons commemorated in them. Both aims were far more likely to be fulfilled on the walls of a temple (where the deity's sanctity safeguarded the documents, and any visitor would encounter them on their way to the *cella*) than on a freestanding *stele* erected somewhere in the sanctuary. Although it is not a religious victory of some kind that is proclaimed in the inscriptions discussed here (as in those discussed by Gianfranco Agosti in chapter 9), the *pronaos* inscriptions do reflect some kind of victory: that of the civic community and its individual members over oblivion.

Conclusion

When we now have a final look at the publication of the Latin version of the *Res gestae* in the *pronaos* of the temple of Roma and Augustus in Ancyra, it can be concluded that its presence there follows a long and relatively broad tradition in Asia Minor of publishing texts in the entrance area of temples, although the amount of text this temple came to carry and the documents' character remain exceptional. Von Hesberg has argued that the presentation of the Latin version in the *pronaos* was influenced by the publication of the document in Rome on bronze tablets, though he admits that the layout of the monument in Rome is completely unknown.[87] Stimulating as this suggestion might be, the fact that the Latin text was inscribed in the *pronaos*, a place generally reserved

87 Von Hesberg (2009) 21, based on the observation that the Greek text is published on the whole width of the walls and therefore more easily accessible, and that its lettering is evidently larger than the Latin version, which would have contributed significantly to the readability of the text. The only source for the erection of the inscriptions on bronze tablets is Suetonius' well-known remark (*Aug*. 101.4: *altero indicem rerum a se gestarum, quem vellet incidi in aeneis tabulis, quae ante Mausoleum statuerentur* ('in the second, an

for the oldest documents, can now be seen as forming part of a wider epigraphical habit of publishing documents on temples in Hellenistic and Roman Asia Minor. The character of the document fits well into the categories we have observed so far: on the one hand the *Res gestae* can be considered a document drawn up by a higher authority, although not directed at the city of Ancyra. On the other hand, this 'account of achievements' can be connected to the imperial cult celebrated in the temple and compared with similar testimonies to the accomplishments of the gods, like the civic decree for Hecate in Lagina.

Ancient visitors of temples in Hellenistic and Roman Asia Minor encountered a large variety of documents on the *antae* walls, ranging from letters of kings and magistrates to civic decrees concerning the polis itself or, to a lesser extent, regulations for the cult. What all these records have in common is their aspiration to publicly display the mentioned events, privileges, rights and individuals publicly on the walls of the temple and, consequently, inside the sanctuary. The fate of the documents' availability in the public space was thus intertwined with the fate of the temple. Most significantly, these inscriptions of a predominantly secular character differ remarkably from the texts published at the doorways of early Christian churches, since they do not refer to the deity or the cult in general and do not form part of the preconceived architectural structure.[88] An analysis of the presence of this variety of documents has shown that the ancient temple fulfilled a multidimensional range of functions in a significant number of cities in Asia Minor, ranging from a religious and economical role to (as in the cases analysed here) a monumental support for the publication of civic dossiers.[89]

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account of what he had accomplished, which he desired to have cut upon bronze tablets and set up at the entrance of the Mausoleum'), translation by J.C. Rolfe).

88 See the contribution of Agosti in this volume (chapter 9); this observation also applies to several Medieval church façades (Debiais (forthcoming)).

89 This contribution emerged from the Heidelberg Collaborative Research Centre 933 'Material Text Cultures. Materiality and Presence of Writing in Non-Typographic Societies' (Subproject No. A01 UP1 'The presence of text monuments and the representation of civic communities in Hellenistic and early Imperial Asia Minor (3rd cent. BC–2nd cent. AD)'. The CRC 933 is financed by the German Research Foundation (DFG). I would hereby like to thank Raphael Hunsucker, Sjoukje Kamphorst, Hilmar Klinkott, Ludwig Meier, Emilie van Opstall, Christof Schuler and Christina Williamson for their valuable comments and discussions. Arnd Hennemeyer and Ahmet Tırpan were so kind to give me their permission to reproduce the plan of the sanctuary of Athena Polias in Priene and that of Hecate in Lagina respectively. Any remaining errors are of course my own.

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CHAPTER 9

Versus *De Limine* and *In Limine*
Displaying Greek paideia *at the Entrance of Early Christian Churches*

Gianfranco Agosti

One of the most intriguing features of late antique culture is the increasing amount of metrical inscriptions, especially during the fourth and the fifth century CE. Taking on some functions previously reserved to prose inscriptions, epigrams on stone witnessed the ubiquitous love for poetry in late antique society.[1] They were the 'everyday life poetry' people usually gazed at, just walking through the agora, pausing a while by honorific statues, and entering a public or religious building. By their nature, inscriptional poems raise apparently contrasting questions, and require apparently diverging methodological approaches as well. On one hand, as poems, they belong to the realm of literature and need to be analysed from a literary perspective.[2] On the other hand, as displayed texts they cannot be treated only as literary texts, without questioning the role they played in the social life of the late antique world. Dealing with a limited, specific category of verse inscriptions from Eastern Late Antiquity, this paper aims to suggest that the literary and social perspectives do not exclude each other, but rather coexist.

It is not my intention to provide a comprehensive survey of Greek verse inscriptions at the entrances of churches in Late Antiquity, given that the material is scattered and we lack a comprehensive *corpus*.[3] I will rather explore, through a selected sample of epigrams,[4] the functions and purposes of such

1 Surveys of Greek poetic production in Late Antiquity in Agosti (2012) and Cameron (2015) 163–184, with further bibliography.

2 For an overall view on literary issues in late antique metrical inscriptions, see Agosti (2008) and (2015b).

3 Like the collection in Kendall (1998) for medieval portals. For Byzantine verse inscriptions on churches and monasteries, see Lauxtermann (2003) 338–340 and the invaluable corpus established by Rhoby (2014). For the *pars Orientis* we do not have a literary source comparable to the *Letter* 32 of Paulinus of Nola, where he reports the *uersiculi in ipsis basilicae novae ingressibus* of Cimitile (Paulinus of Nola, *Epist.* 32.13, p. 289 Hartel): see now the detailed commentary by Herbert de la Portbarré-Viard (2009) 178–178 and her contribution in this volume.

4 Either on lintels, thresholds, or on mosaic floors, with an occasional degree of uncertainty depending on our actual knowledge of the archaeological context.

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inscriptions. From this perspective, audience response is a crucial issue.[5] To what extent were metrical inscriptions supposed to be deciphered and understood by people entering (or leaving) churches? Two main issues are actually related to this question: a) gazing at and reading—I will briefly discuss at the end of the paper to what extent we can actually speak of 'reading'—a metrical inscription was not a neutral activity, but rather a sort of re-enactment of Christian identity *against* polytheism and the pagan past. Consequently, b) inscribing poems on the doorways of the churches was part of the more general strategy of Christianizing the civic space of late antique cities.

On the Threshold: The Symbolism of the Door in Christian Poetry

The multiple meanings of the symbolism of doors in Christian churches have been extensively studied, and are tackled in other chapters of this volume, especially in light of the development of liturgy.[6] In this chapter, I sketch the reception of the symbolism in Greek Christian poetry of the fourth and fifth century CE to outline the highbrow literary background authors of inscriptions had to take into account.

The theme of the door has a significant presence in one of the first examples of Christian Greek classicizing poetry, the so-called *Vision of Dorotheus*, an enigmatic text of the mid-fourth century (P. Bodmer 29).[7] In this poem the narrator/protagonist experiencing a sort of incubatory vision tells how he is transported into God's palace. Here he is appointed as gatekeeper (l. 17 ἤμην πραιποσίτοισιν ἐνὶ μ[έσσοις]ι θυ[ρωρός], 'I was as a doorkeeper among the *praepositi*')[8] receiving the order to stay in front of the doors (πρὸ θύρῃσι). But he fails to keep his post and, even worse, he watches forbidden things through

5 In what follows I take for granted the primary, and most obvious, 'political' functions of inscribed poems, namely the celebration of Christian benefactors and donors who established themselves as successors of civic patrons, or of the public position of bishops within the city. See Brown (1980) on the social implications of the bishops' *lithomania*, and Rapp (2005) on the civic role of bishops.

6 I just mention Lassus (1947) 186–194; Favreau (1991); Deichmann (1993) 93–95; Spieser (1995); Elsner (2013) 201–220; Yasin (2017) on the function of monumental arches, gateways, and avenues of approach to Christian sanctuaries; as well as the contributions to the present volume by Day (chapter 2) and Boudignon (chapter 3) and the bibliography quoted by van Opstall (chapter 1). On the symbolism of doors in a comparative perspective, see e.g. Biraghi (1992).

7 TM 59994; bibliography in Agosti (2012) 365 and 390, (2017a) and in the collection of essays edited by Agosti, Buzi and Camplani (2015). English translation by Kessels and van der Horst (1986).

8 See Leclercq (1948).

the doors (l. 83 ἐν cχιcταῖc cανίδεccι θύρης ὑπερέδρ[ακ]ον ἄντην, 'I perceived it with my own eyes through the open doors of the gate').[9] As a consequence, he is punished by a severe scourging. In the following, after baptism and trials of modesty and courage Dorotheus resumes his position as gatekeeper. But once again he is impatient and unable to accept such a humble task. He ambitiously begs God to put 'someone of the others who is weak at the gate, for that is the place for weaker mortals [τῶν ἄλλων τις ἀκιδνὸς ἐὼν θυρέῃcιν ἐπιcτῇ, / οὗτος γὰρ τόπος ἔπλετ' ἀκιδνοτέροιcι βροτοῖcι, ll. 311–312]'. At the end of the vision, unfortunately in a section badly preserved, it seems that Dorotheus is confirmed in his role: he becomes taller and he wears a cloak, a scarf (an *orarium*) and a glittering belt. That means that he has been elevated to a higher rank, probably to an ecclesiastic function, according to the symbolism of the entire scene.[10] The centrality of the door in Dorotheus' story of failing and repentance is evident also from the frequency with which the word occurs (22 times in about 350 lines). Although some key passages are rather obscure due to missing portions in the papyrus, it is nonetheless clear enough that the role of gatekeeper in the story has to do with the question of being included (or re-included) into the Christian community.[11]

Some decades later, in the mid-fifth century, empress Eudocia, who in her entire poetic production sought to mediate between classical epic and Christian culture, composed an appealing poem on St Cyprian of Antioch (a sorcerer converted to Christian faith and eventually martyrized), transferring into epic verse a hagiographical narrative.[12] In the first book Cyprian attempts to seduce a Christian virgin named Justa with the help of demonic forces, which are repeatedly defeated by the girl's unshakable faith. Cyprian, struck by the power of the Cross, is suddenly converted. He destroys his pagan idols and embraces Christian faith. Invited by the bishop of Antioch to 'enter the precincts of God'

9 Due to the poor state of the papyrus in the preceding lines, it is not clear which door Dorotheus is watching through. Livrea (1986) 708 pointed towards the tradition of the door opening unto the heavenly court; I wonder if Dorotheus is speaking of the wooden sanctuary door (or screen?), according to a specific Egyptian model, see Bolman (2007). Note that cχιcταῖc is a correction for cχιcμαῖc of the papyrus.

10 As pointed out by Livrea (1986) 694–695.

11 The *Vision* was produced in a community of Christians particularly concerned with literary *paideia* and its adaptation to Christian subjects Agosti (2017a). On a literary level, the image of the door is related to the problem of creating a new Christian poetry, re-using and manipulating classical language. Indeed, the *Vision* tells a story of poetic initiation and its author enters the doorway of a new poetry.

12 On Eudocia, see Agosti (2012) 368 and 387 and Cameron (2015) 37–80. Greek text according to Ludwich (1897).

(σηκοῖς θεοῦ ἐγκαταδύνειν, l. 242), he reaches the church (ll. 252–261). Here he steps 'onto the threshold of the temple' (l. 259 ἐπὶ βηλὸν ἔβη νεώ corresponding to the simple εἰσιόντι in the prose *Vorlage*).[13] After having prayed to the Lord to hear 'a word from the holy writings that bodes well for me', and while he is still standing on the threshold of the temple, Cyprian listens to the reading of *Ps.* 34.22 (εἶδες, κύριε, μὴ παρασιωπήσῃς, κύριε, μὴ ἀποστῇς ἀπ' ἐμοῦ).[14] At the moment when the priest invites people who are not baptized to leave the church ('exit the temple of God, o half-perfected ones'), Cyprian remains seated[15] and utters his profession of faith (ll. 279–289).[16]

Later on Cyprian receives baptism, and becomes lector, θυρωρός (l. 299) and finally priest (sixteen years later he will be appointed bishop of Antioch). The symbolism of stepping onto the threshold does not require further explanation: Cyprian leaves the profane, and his pagan past, and enters the sacred. This binary system is somehow prepared in the lines immediately preceding (ll. 219–242) by the opposition between pagan books and the holy Book. Cyprian brings his magical books (βύβλους μαγικάς) to bishop Anthimus, asking the inscription in the Book of Life (βύβλῳ [τ'] ἐγκαταλέξαι ἐμὸν κέαρ, l. 225).[17]

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13 Eudocia was probably aware that in epic tradition βηλόν means also 'heaven' (Emped. F 84.33, Q.S. 13.483, and *Il.* 1.591 et al. with *scholia*). Unfortunately, the hagiographic text (and Eudocia consequently) is very elusive about the church where the scene takes places. The martyrium of St Babila at the temple of Apollo in Daphne would be the natural candidate, mainly because Justa was living in Daphne. But there are no cogent reasons to exclude, e.g., the Great Church of Antioch, or another one; and it is hard to see anything but a linguistic variation in the difference between οἶκον / ἀχράντοιο θεοῦ (291-20 = κυριακὸν οἶκον *Vorlage*) and σηκοῖς θεοῦ (242 = εὐκτήριον οἶκον). On the churches of Antioch, see the comprehensive survey by Mayer and Allen (2012), and also Shepardson (2014) 19–26.

14 Then follow quotations from Os. 52.13, *Ps.* 118.148, Is. 44.2, 41.9, *Gal.* 3.13, *Ps.* 105.2 (the only passage from this constellation attested in an inscription: 786 Felle [Barcino, Spain; late seventh century]). The readings reflect probably the *missa catechumenorum*, see Zahn (1888) 28 n. 3; and Sowers (2008) 159.

15 The Greek has θῶκοι: I wonder if Eudocia meant with this term the seats reserved for the catechumens.

16 Especially ll. 285–289 'God is eternally alive, who alone demonstrated wicked demons to be reproachful, and saved the maiden, and had pity on my heart. It is not lawful for me to leave this house until I have come to faith in Christ' (translation Sowers (2008)). For the liturgical background of the scene, see e.g. Lassus (1947) 193–194; Mathews (1971) 138–152; on the *atrium* and the catechumens, see also Michel (2001) 18–20.

17 At the end of book 11, the paraphrase of the so-called *Confessio*, Cyprian dismisses again pagan lore: μαψιδίως σοφίην δὲ μάθον, προτέρων δέ τε βύβλους, 'the wisdom and the books of the ancient were in vain taught to me' (2.430).

After Anthimus had burned them, Cyprian goes to the church and waits for a 'good sign' from the Scriptures.[18]

In ipsis ingressibus hi versiculi sunt

It is significant that the first reading of the Scripture (μῦθον ἐκ γραφικῶν βίβλων) Cyprian listens to on the threshold comes from the *Psalms*. In Syria quotations from the *Psalms* could be frequently read before entering a church, inscribed at the main entrance, or on the floor mosaics.[19] In the case of inscriptions placed at the entrance the most commonly quoted passage was *Ps.* 117.20 ('This is the gate of the Lord. The just shall enter within it'): in his book, Antonio Felle lists 34 occurrences, most of which are from the Syro-Palestinian area.[20] The same verse appears very frequently in Western medieval churches too—as Robert Favreau pointed out some years ago, in a rich survey of the epigraphic theme of the door.[21] The most common Scriptural authority is John 10.9 'I am the door. By me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved'. Endlessly exploited in liturgical literature, and in medieval portals,[22] it is less common in the Greek world, with the remarkable exception of the magnificent inscription in the lintel above the central Imperial Door in the church of Hagia Sophia (505 Felle). Here a codex showing John's passage is open and fills a throne settled within an arch with columns.[23] The text sounds εἶπεν ὁ κ(ύριος) | ἐγώ εἰμι | ἡ θύρα τῶν | προβάτων | δι' ἐμοῦ | ἐάν τις | εἰσέλθῃ | εἰσελεύσετ(αι) | καὶ ἐξελεύσετ(αι) | κ(αὶ) νομὴν | εὑρήσει.[24]

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18 The presence at l. 258 of the word κληδόνα (epic 'translation' of Biblical κληδονισμός) is not coincidental. Eudocia wanted to point out the difference with the pagan past of Cyprian, who was an expert in all kinds of *omina*—as he himself will tell in the second book of the poem (the so-called *Confessio Cypriani*: see Agosti (2013), with further bibliography).

19 For surveys on Biblical quotations in inscriptions, see Feissel (1984), completed and updated by Felle (2006) and (2015).

20 I just mention a couple of them, among the many possible examples. The first (234 Felle) comes from the lintel over the main entrance to the nave of the Basilica of the Sinai Monastery (see Ševčenko (1966) 262 n. 2; Felle (2015) 362; Yasin (2017) 175); the second (120 Felle = *IdC* 21 Feissel-Dagron = *SEG* 37.1326) from the moulded course that crowns the lintel above the door to the central nave of the narthex of a church in Kanlıdivane, Elaioussa Sebasté, fifth-sixth century (Cilicia).

21 See Favreau (1991); Roux (2004).

22 Kendall (1998) 51–61.

23 See also Kähler (1967) pl. 22 and 62. On the date of the inscription, see Felle (2006) 235.

24 The text is slightly different from the original Εἶπεν οὖν πάλιν ὁ Ἰησοῦς, Ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι ἐγώ εἰμι ἡ θύρα τῶν προβάτων.... (9) ἐγώ εἰμι ἡ θύρα· δι' ἐμοῦ ἐάν τις εἰσέλθῃ σωθήσεται καὶ

Late antique poetic renditions of the same verse of John stress the importance of Jesus's typological self-representation. For instance, Nonnus of Panopolis (mid-fifth century) in his *Paraphrase of St John's Gospel* 10.24–31:

πανδόκος εἰμὶ θύρη προβάτων πολυχανδέος αὐλῆς.
πάντες, ὅσοι πάρος ἦλθον ὑποκλέπτοντι πεδίλῳ,
φῶρες ἔσαν δολόεντες· ὅθεν ληίστορι φωνῇ
αὐτῶν φθεγγομένων οὐκ ἔκλυε πώεα ποίμνης.
πανδόκος εἰμὶ θύρη μηλοσσόος· ἡμετέρης δὲ
ὅς κεν **ἰὼν δι᾽ ἐμεῖο θύρην** ὑποδύσεται **αὐλῆς**,
οὗτος ἔσω στείχει καὶ ὑπότροπος αὖτις ὁδεύει
καὶ νομὸν εὑρήσει καὶ ἀεισόος ἔσσεται ἀνήρ.

> I am the all-receiving gate to the capacious sheep-pen. All those who came before with stealthy sandal were sneaky thieves, whence the flock did not obey them as they spoke with their thievish voice. I am the all-receiving, sheep-saving gate; whoever will go through my door and enter into my hall, that man walks inside and goes out again and he will find pasture and will be forever safe.

Nonnus, well aware of the soteriological meaning of the passage, and of the sheep-gate as an image of the church, expresses it through an accurate search for variation in rendering the verbs of John's verse at ll. 29–31, as well as through the transposing of the crucial σωθήσεται into the final position. According to his exegetical method *per adjectiva*, he introduces the symbolism by πανδόκος ('all-receiving', 'common to all'), a Pindaric tag conveying a new meaning, since it refers to the church or to Paradise in Christian poetry.[25] This kind of technique (usually called *Usurpation*), consisting in adapting phraseology from a prestigious classical model to the new Christian content, is one of the major literary

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εἰσελεύσεται καὶ ἐξελεύσεται καὶ νομὴν εὑρήσει ('Then said Jesus unto them again, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep … I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture"', KJV). The only significant deviation is the omission of σωθήσεται (probably considered unnecessary and disturbing the tricolon of verbs of movement). See also Felle (2015) 362, and the chapter 1 on Hagia Sophia by van Opstall in this volume.

25 Pind. *Pyth*. 8.60–61 πανδόκον / ναόν (the temple of Apollo at Delphi): henceforth, Greg. Naz. *Carm*. 2.1.1, 388 Tuilier-Bady ἐπὶ πανδόκον οἶκον; Nonn. *Par*. 5.33 πανδόκον οἶκον (the Temple); and 14.6 πανδόκος αὐλή; 14.8 πολυχανδέος … αὐλῆς (Paradise).

strategies adopted by Christian poets. As such, it also appears in metrical inscriptions, as we will see in what follows.

Let us now move to metrical inscriptions. Characteristically enough, in our first two examples the poem is associated with the usual quotation of *Ps.* 117.20. The first is an inscription carved on the marble lintel of the basilica at Palaiopolis (Kerkyra), recently re-edited by Georges Kiourtzian (*IG* IX 1, 720 and 721 = 569 Felle).[26] The actual church is the result of a gradual diminution of the original five-aisle basilica, with a transept, a double narthex and an atrium. On the lintel, the first line consists of the quotation of the Psalm (written with bigger letters), followed by the metrical text written in two consecutive lines. Nonetheless, the metrical structure of the epigram is pointed out by crosses and blank spaces:

> ☩ αὕτη ἡ πύλη τοῦ κυρίου. δίκεοι εἰσελεύσοντ<αι> ἐν αὐτῇ.
>
> πίστιν ἔχων βασίλιαν ἐμῶν μενέων συνέριθον *uacat*
> σοί, μά<κα>ρ ὑψιμέδον, τόνδ' ἱερὸν ἔκτισα νηὸν ☩ |
> Ἑλλήνων τεμένη καὶ βωμοὺς ἐξαλαπάξας *uacat* ☩
> χειρὸς ἀπ' οὐτιδανῆς Ἰοβιανὸς ἔδνον ἄνακτι. |
>
> The very gate of the Lord. Let the righteous enter.
>
> With the faith of our Emperor, my passions' helpmate, for You, Blessed on High, this holy temple I did found, having destroyed the precincts and altars of the Hellenes. From a humble hand, Jovian [dedicates this], a gift for the Lord.

The lintel, as well as the columns, are *spolia* from a profane building (an *odeion*). It is remarkable that Jovian, humble as he is feigning to be, wanted a highbrow-style epigram at the entrance of the church. Such a choice was intended to convey an ideological message, of course. This apparently 'Homeric' text carefully employs a typical 'late antique' language, characterized by elements of the new Christian poetry, like the adjective ὑψιμέδων at line 2, and the humility topos at line 4 (οὐτιδανός is frequent in this kind of inscriptions).[27] The only real Homeric word is ἐξαλαπάξας at line 3, a verb always referring

26 'L'épigramme … est gravée sur l'architrave en marbre blanc qui surmonte l'entrée de la nef centrale': Kiourtzian (2013–2014) 5. Kiourtzian suggests the age of Justianian as a possible date of the inscription.

27 See e.g. *SGO* 16/43/06, ll. 5–6; *SGO* 21/22/01.1–4.

to the fall of Troy (*Il.* 1.129 et al.) and another instance of *Usurpation*. Line 3 was obviously the most important of the epigram, marked by paratextual signs (a blank space and a cross),[28] in order to emphasize Jovian's victory over paganism. The material *spolia* reused for the entrance conveyed an immediate sense of defeat of the Hellenic past, and the beholder was invited to read the epigram as a sort of enacted commentary on the *spolia*. Moreover, the language of the text suggested that the pagan literary past had been defeated—a victory described by a Homeric word, i.e. by the same tradition that is overcome.

In an inscription found on the mosaic floor at the western end of the nave facing the main door of the Basilica A of Nicopolis (to be dated to the end of the age of Justinian, or even later, *SEG* 55.630),[29] we find again *Ps.* 117, following a four-line epigram:

> Λίθον ἀπαστράπτοντα Θ(εο)ῦ χάριν ἔνθα κ(αὶ) ἔνθα
> ἐκ θεμέθλων τολύπευσε κ(αὶ) ἀγλαίην πόρε πᾶσαν
> Δουμέτιος περίπυστος, ἀμωμήτων ἱερήων ἀρχιερεὺς
> πανάριστος, ὅλης πάτρης μέγα φέν[γος]
> αὕτη ἡ πύλη τοῦ Κ(υρίο)υ, δίκαιοι εἰσέλθονται
>
> A stone flashing forth God's grace hither and thither from the foundations he finished and all splendour gave Dometius widely known archpriest of faultless priests, great light of all the fatherland; the very gate of the Lord. Let just men enter.

Bishop Dometius was apparently fond of poetry and inscribed two more epigrams on the pavement, one almost identical to the former in the south of the narthex, and another one describing the mosaic decoration of the west wing of the transept. The epigram at the entrance of the nave, not particularly memorable, celebrates the bishop using the current repertory of images (ll. 3–4): it significantly adopts a definition used in public inscriptions for governors and civic officials, ὅλης πάτρης μέγα φέν[γος].[30] In another epigram below the

28 For further examples of the semantic relevance of paratextual signs, see Agosti (2015a). Sometimes crosses have a mere decorative function, like in *IGLS* XXI 135–137, an *ex voto* from the lintels above the doors of a church in the village of Umm al-Jimāl, see Bader (2009) 110–111.

29 See the groundbreaking article by Kitzinger (1951), and Maguire (1987) 21–25. Translation by Spiro (1978) 658.

30 Cf. Robert (1948) 93ff., and Roueché (1997) 364: 'one striking phenomenon is that verse is used to praise bishops just as much as other benefactors, and in a very similar

landscape in the central panel of the floor mosaic in the North transept of the church, Homeric quotations give a sort of exegetical key to the reader, in order to explain the cosmological meaning of the iconographic program.[31]

The use of classical rare words and quotations is neither infrequent, nor even surprising, in the light of the 'jeweled' aesthetics of late antique literature. In some cases, moreover, stylistic features of the text intended to convey a message. This is evident in an inscription from Bostra, dated to the mid-fifth century CE (*IGLS* XIII 9119a–d = *SGO* 22/42/05):[32]

[☩ δόγμα]τος ὀρθοτόμου ταμίης καὶ ὑπέρμαχος ἐσθλός,
ἀρχιερεὺς θεόπνευστος ἐδείματο κάλλος ἄμετρον ☩
[Ἀντίπατ]ρος κλυτόμητις ἀεθλοφόρους μετ᾽ ἀγῶνας,
κυδαίνων μεγάλως θεομήτορα πάρθενον ἁγνὴν ~ (*palma*)·
Μαρίαν πολύϋμνον ἀκήρατον ἀγλαόδωρον (*palma*)

1 [δόγμα]τος Mouterde 3 [Ἀντίπατρ]ο[ς Waddington

Dispenser of the right doctrine and valorous champion, archbishop inspired by God, Antipater built this extraordinary beauty, famous for his skill, after victorious contests, greatly glorifying the Mother of God, the pure Virgin, Mary rich in hymns, untouched, bestowing splendid gifts.

The epigram is a refined poem, exhibiting phraseology from the Septuagint, Patristic texts, and Christian poetry (Gregory of Nazianzus, Nonnus);[33] 'Homeric' language has undergone complete new meaning (e.g., ἀρχιερεύς is a

terminology'; Rapp (2005) 169–171. At l. 2 the verb τολυπεύω ('wind off, accomplish') is quite rare in this sense, but occurs also in a similar context in *AP* 9.655,1 (τολύπευσαν τόνδε δόμον βασιλῆες), an epigram of the age of Heraclius (seventh century).

31 On the relations between the text and the iconography, see Agosti (2011–2012) 247–270 (providing also further bibliography). See also the inscription framed in a medallion in the mosaic floor of the narthex, in front of the main entrance of the church of the Holy Martyrs (Madaba), published by Di Segni (2006) 586. I follow the textual reconstruction by D. Feissel (*BE* 2008.571) "Οστις πρόσειςι | [κα]ῤδίαν ἁγνὴν ἔχοι, | / [μνήμην φ]υλάττων| [ἐν β]ίῳ (?) τῶν μαρτύρων, | / [δι]δούς τε δόξαν| τῷ Θεῷ κατ᾽ἀξίαν ('Whoever enters hither, should have a pure hearth, keeping (the memory) in his life of the martyrs and giving glory to God as is His due', translation Di Segni, modified).

32 On Antipater, bishop of Bostra in the year 457–458, see *CPG* 6680–6698.

33 For line 2 θεόπνευστος see *2Tim* 3.16 (πᾶσα γραφὴ θεόπνευστος); Greg. Naz.; Nonn. (e.g. *P.* 2.89 θεοπνεύστῳ … βίβλῳ); for line 3 see Nonn., *D.* 48.177 (ἀεθλοφόρον μετὰ νίκην, 10.419 ἀεθλοφόρων ἐν ἀγῶνι). At line 5 πολύυμνος is hymnic (e.g. *HOrph.* 55.1, 76.12) and Christian

current definition of bishops in late metrical inscriptions). At line 3 the adjective κλυτόμητις is relevant: usually denoting activitity of governors (and sometimes even of the Emperors) in verse inscriptions, when employed by Christians it marks the contrast between political and religious power.[34] Antipater, therefore, aimed at showing his orthodoxy and devotion to the Virgin through the language of his time: we can define this epigram as a good example of 'literary orthodoxy'. The lintel was found 'above the large gate of the castle, at the inside, on a stone of five or six metres in length, of which the left-end was inserted in a wall,'[35] and we do not know if it was placed at the doorway of the church built by Antipater. If it was so, it reminded worshippers of the generosity of their learned bishop by a remarkable sample of Christian poetry.[36]

On an incomparably larger scale, an exceptional case is that of the 76-line inscription of the church of St Polyeuctus, the longest late antique stone epigram dated to the twenties of the sixth century. It was known only through the Palatine manuscript (*Greek Anthology* 1.10)[37] until 1961, when inscribed blocks containing letters from the poem, as Ihor Ševčenko recognized, were discovered. The inscription was carefully divided into two main parts, of which the first (ll. 1–41) was inscribed in the interior of the church, running around the entablature of the nave, starting in the south-east corner. The second (ll. 42–76) was carved, according to the lemmata in the Palatine manuscript, ἐν τῇ εἰσόδῳ τοῦ αὐτοῦ ναοῦ ('at the entrance of the same church), ἔξωθεν τοῦ νάρθηκος ('outside the narthex'), and arranged into five plaques of uneven length. This part of the poem, which people entering the church were supposed to read first, extols the achievements of Anicia Juliana, giving also a brief *ekphrasis* of the interior of the church. In the part inside the carved letters followed, in a continuous frieze, an alternating arched or horizontal path around 135 meters of entablature, at a height of 6–7 metres, what surely made the text very difficult to be read. This is why many scholars suggest that the internal part was just an ornament, intended to convey a sort of 'magical' power of the

(Synesius, Nonnus and Paul the Silentiary) = πολυύμνητος in prose. For a fuller discussion, see Agosti (2016) 281–283.

34 See e.g. *APl* 43 = *SGO* 05/01/10 = *LSA* 2588 (governor), and *SGO* 21/22/01 (God) etc.

35 Waddington (1878) 426 remarks also that the inscription is 'la plus belle parmi les inscriptions chrétiennes que j'ai copiée dans le Haouran' ; similarly Sartre (1982) 191: 'magnifique inscription métrique, dont la beauté ne trouve guère d'équivalent dans le Ḥawrān.'

36 For another possible occurrence of metrical inscription at the entrance of a church in Bostra, see *IGLS* XIII 9117 = *SGO* 24/36 (unfortunately very fragmentary).

37 It exerted a strong influence on later ekphrastic poems (probably through a manuscript copy). See Whitby (2006), Agosti (2010) 178–179, Schibille (2014) 91–95.

letters.[38] On the contrary, the external half clearly aimed at introducing the visitor to the splendours of the church and celebrating Juliana's accomplishment.

Material and Literary *Spolia*

In every respect, St Polyeuctus' inscription is an exceptional case. Its highbrow diction and style were intended as the written equivalent of the magnificence of the building, conveying to people standing in front of it the sense of the overwhelming beauty of the church, as well as Anicia Juliana's religious devotion (and power). The five plaques at the entrance were a sort of guide to the glory of the church under the sign of *paideia*. This prestige of culture is also a common feature of lower-quality inscriptions, which can be even more relevant for our theme.

In city of Jerash (Jordan), bishop Aeneas[39] dedicated the church of St Theodore between 494 and 496 CE, after decades of progressive Christianization of the urban space.[40] On the lintel above the central door to the atrium a 13-line epigram was inscribed (*SGO* 21/23/03,[41] see fig. 9.1a–b):

ϑάμβος ὁμοῦ καὶ θαῦμα παρερχομένοιϲιν ἐτύχθην·
πᾶν γὰρ ἀκοϲμίης λέλυταῐ ῥέφος, ἀντι δὲ λήμης
τῆς προτέρης πάντη με θεοῦ χάρις ἀμφιβέβηκεν.
καί ποτε τετραπόδων | ὀπόϲα μογέοντα δαμείη
ἐνθάδε ῥιπτομένων ὀδμὴ διεγείρ{ειρ}ετο λυγρή. ☩
πολλάκι καὶ παριών τις ἐῆς ἐδράξατο ῥινὸς
καὶ πνοιῆς πό[ρ]ον εἶρξε| κακοϲμίην ἀλεείνων.
νῦν δὲ δι' ἀμβροϲίοιο πέδου περόωντες ὁδεῖται
δεξιτέρην παλάμην ϲφετέρῳ προϲάγουϲι μετώπῳ,
ϲταυροῦ τιμήεντο[ϲ ἐπὶ ϲφρ]ηγῖδα τελοῦντες. |
ῃ̣ὶ δ' ἐθέλεις κ(αὶ) τοῦτο δαήμεναι, ὄφρ' ἐὺ εἰδῇϲ,
Αἰνείας τόδε κάλλος ἐμοὶ πόρεν ἀξιέραϲτον
πάνϲοφος εὐϲεβίῃ μεμελημένος ἱεροφάντης. | ☩

7 πό[θ]ον *edd.: corr.* Jones *ap.* Crowfoot, PEQ 61, 1929, 21 ('the passage of breath'), F. Valerio, ZPE 179, 2011, 116

38 See e.g. James (2007), Lauxtermann (2003) 273, and Rhoby (2012).

39 See Michel (2001) 233–240.

40 Compare also March (2011).

41 Moralee (2006); Agosti (2010) 171. Translation: Moralee (2006) 192, slightly modified.



A



B

FIGURE 9.1A–B SGO *21/23/03* (*a*) *left part and* (*b*) *right part.*
PHOTOS BY JULIEN ALIQUOT 2013 © PROGRAMME IGLS, CNRS/HISOMA.

> †I have been made at once an amazement and marvel to those passing by, for the entire cloud of disorderliness has been dispersed, [and] instead of the former eyesore all the grace of God has surrounded me. And formerly so many four-footed toiling beasts fell down here that a stomach-turning stench arose.† And often someone nearby pinched his nose and gave up the passage of breathing to avoid the bad smell. But now those passing over the fragrant ground carry [their] right hand to their brow, making the sign of the honorable cross. And if you wish to learn in order that you might know [it] well, Aeneas gave this desirable beauty to me, the all-wise priest practiced in piety.

The building speaks in the first person (establishing a dialogue with the visitor, a common feature of monumental Christian inscriptions, as Paolo Liverani has recently shown).[42] Denigrating the site of an earlier pagan shrine, or a trash dump, the inscription tells the story of the defeat of paganism, in binary terms: ποτε (l. 4) *vs* νῦν (l. 8), the cloud of disorderliness (l. 2) *vs* the beauty (l. 12), the horrible smell (l. 5) *vs* the fragrancy (l. 8).[43] The poem begins as an ekphrasis, evoking the amazement of the beholder (this is one of the most common features of late antique epideictic epigrams), to turn itself immediately into a triumphalist story about the victory of Christianity, based on what we could define the 'scent of salvation' and the power of the cross. Finally, in the last three lines the name of the bishop is celebrated.

Before leaving the church, worshippers could read another inscription, this time on the inner face of the lintel. The building speaks again in first person, *SGO* 21/23/04 (see fig. 9.2):[44]

> Ϯἄχραντο[ς] δόμος εἰμὶ ἀεθλοφόρου Θεοδώρου
> μάρτυρος ἀθανάτου θεοειδέος, οὗ κλέος ἔπτη
> ἐν χθονὶ κ(αὶ) πόντῳ | καὶ τέρμασιν Ὠκεανοῖο.
> cῶμα γὰρ ἐν γαίῃ, ψυχὴ δ᾽ εἰς οὐρανὸν εὐρύν,
> ἀγγελικῆς μετὰ πότμον ἀεὶ μετέχουca χορείης.
> ἔρκος | ἀλεξίκακ[ο]ν τελέθει κἀγήραον ἕρμα
> ἄστει καὶ ναέτῃcι καὶ ἐccομένοιcι πολίταις

42 Liverani (2014).

43 Cf. at ll. 2–3 *Il.* 16.67 νέφος ἀμφιβέβηκε, *Od.* 12.73 νεφέλη δέ μιν ἀμφιβέβηκε; l. 11 = *Il.* 6.150.

44 Translation Moralee (2006) 193, slightly modified.



FIGURE 9.2 SGO *21/23/04*.
PHOTO BY JULIEN ALIQUOT 2010 © PROGRAMME IGLS, CNRS/HISOMA.

☩ χάριτι τοῦ θ(εο)ῦ ἐθεμελιώθη | τὸ ἅγιο[ν μα]ρτύριον μη(νὶ) Δίῳ τῆς *nac* γ' ἰνδ(ικτιῶνος) κ(αὶ) ἀνῆλθεν τὰ ὑπέ[ρ]θυρα ἐν μη(νὶ) Δίῳ τῆς ε' [ἰν]δ(ικτιῶνος) τοῦ θνφ' ἔτ(ους) |

†I am the undefiled house of victorious Theodore, [the] immortal martyr, godlike, whose fame rushed over land and sea and [the] limits of [the] ocean. While [his] body is in [the] earth, [his] soul [has gone] to broad heaven, after death joining the angelic choir. He has become a bulwark against evil, an ageless foundation for the city and for the inhabitants and for future citizens.

†By the grace of God this holy martyrium was completed in the month of Dios in the third indiction, and the lintel was raised in the month Dios in the fifth indiction of the year 559 [of the era of Jerash].

The church extols its own purity (l. 1), the reputation of the martyr spread all over the world[45] and his role as 'bulwark' of the city (once again, adopting an

45 At l. 4 οὐρανὸν εὐρύν *Il.* 3.364; *Od.* 19.40.

expression used for governors in official epigraphy).[46] In a brilliant article, Jason Moralee demonstrated that the triumphalism of both epigrams corresponds to the 'visual triumphalism' represented by *spolia* of pagan buildings incorporated into the church, as well as pagan inscriptions cut into pieces and used to pave the floor. Moralee perceptively pointed out how fragmentary inscriptions reused as decoration played a role in constructing Christian identity in Jerash in the fifth and sixth century. Remembering the pagan past through its physical remains re-enacted also the defeat of paganism. Literary sources seem to support such an interpretation of *spolia*. The *locus classicus* is Mark the Deacon, *Life of Porphyry* 76, where reusing stones from the Marneion of Gaza to pave the floor of the new church is motivated because in this way pagan stones were trampled 'by the foot not only of men, but of women, dogs, pigs and other animals').[47] Although it is not always possible to pinpoint ideological reasons behind the use of *spolia*,[48] in this case it is evident that it was done intentionally. In his insightful book on Christian attitudes towards pagan statues, Troels Myrup Kristensen adduces a similar case from Ephesus, where the atrium pavement in front of the church of Mary is paved with fragmentary inscriptions facing up. In his view, such reuse demonstrates 'the emergence of a new aesthetic that was based on the juxtaposition of diverse elements of *decoration* [my italics], and that is also evident in contemporary Christian churches.'[49]

Moreover, the presence of verse inscriptions on the two faces of the lintel conveyed an ideological and literary message in itself. As we have already seen in the Bostra inscription, displaying Greek *paideia* at the entrance of the church also involved the question of capturing the prestigious literary pagan tradition, and transforming it into something radically different. The re-use of some Homeric tags in a completely new context is parallel to that of *spolia* in the pavement of the floor; and like in the Bostra epigram, these tags coexist with the new language of Christian poetry, especially in the epigram on the inner lintel.[50] There was actually a difference between epigrams in 'Homeric'

46 Cp. *IG* II^2 193 etc.

47 76.5–6, p. 158 Lampadaridi (2016) ἵνα καταπατῶνται οὐ μόνον ὑπὸ ἀνδρῶν, ἀλλὰ καὶ γυναικῶν καὶ κυνῶν καὶ χοίρων καὶ κνωδάλων. Discussion and further bibliography in Coates-Stephens (2003) 349–350.

48 See the cautious remarks by Liverani (2011).

49 Kristensen (2013) 244.

50 For example, adjectives like ἄχραντος, ἀεθλοφόρος, or θεοειδής, or syntagms like μετὰ πότμον, were already naturalized in late antique Christian poetry and we should be cautious in speculating on their debt to pagan notions (cf. Moralee (2006) 196 fn. 128 on ἄχραντος).



FIGURE 9.3 SGO *22/14/04* = IGLS XV 186.
PHOTO BY JEAN STARCKY © PROGRAMME IGLS, CNRS/HISOMA.

(i.e. epic) diction and others that adopted the language of the time. It was not just a question of literary taste (nor did it simply depend on the ability of the author), but was related to the message the text was supposed to transmit to the audience. Christian epigrams exhibited the language and style of Christian literary poetry as an intentional and ideological choice, in order to strengthen the Christian identity of the community the inscriptions were addressing. This is a general feature of Christian *rhetorikè techne* (of which poetry is part),[51] and part of the role that Greek *paideia* played in late antique society as well.[52]

Such an ideological intention can even be seen in inscriptions of low literary level, where one can observe the curious, albeit not infrequent, phenomenon of the coexistence of a good acquaintance with epic language and a careless prosody or even an inability to produce correct hexameters. This is the case with *SGO* 22/14/04 = *IGLS* XV 186 (see fig. 9.3), a remarkable inscription, found in Azraʿ at the southern border of the Laja (Hawrān),[53] and to be dated on

51 Cf. Van Nuffelen (2015) on the importance of rhetorical skills for preachers in the fourth century and on their appreciation by an exigent audience. On the distinction between 'Homeric' and 'Christian' language in stone epigrams, see Agosti (2017b).

52 On this role, see van Hoof (2013).

53 In Azraʿ 'the material evidence … reveals few signs of the new religion until the first quarter of the sixth century', as Trombley 1995, II 360 remarks.

palaeographical grounds to the sixth century CE. The poem combines the story of the dedicatees with a summary of the martyr's passion, i.e. St Sergius.[54]

☩ καὶ νῦν σωτῆρος δεσπότου θεοῦ δύναμιν ὁρῶν
δόξασον ἄνακτ' ἅγιον, ὃς εἰδώλων ὤλησεν ἔργα·
οὗτος γὰρ δόμος τὸ πρὶν γλυπτῶν δαιμόνων ἐτέυκτο
ἀχρίστοις λάεσι *vac* δεδμημένος, οὓς λόγος Χριστοῦ
λῦσεν, ἠδ' ἀνήγειρεν εὐξέστοισι λάεσι
δόμον ἑοῦ θεράποντος εὐίππεός τε Σεργίου,
σπουδῇ καὶ ἔργοισι παίδων ἐσθλοῦ Θεοδώρου,
Σέργιν αὐτὸν ἅγιον ἔχειν ἀρωγὸν θελήσαντες,
ὃς χθόνιον κράτος ἀνήνετο ἠδὲ πικρούς τε
βασσάνους ἐδέξατο κεφαλῆς ἄπο μέχρι ποδῶν τε·
πόδας γὰρ ἡλωθεὶς κεφαλῆς οὐκ ἐφείσατ' ὁ κλῖνος,
ἀλλ' θανάτῳ προΐδωκεν ψυχὴν ἑῷ δεσπότῃ δώσας
σωτῆρι ἠδ' ἀντὶ χθονίας οὐρανίαν ἔλαχεν ζω|ήν.

And now, seeing the power of the Saviour, master, God, glorify the holy king, who has destroyed the works of idols. For this house was once adorned with images of demons and bound by rough stones, which the logos of Christ has freed and has re-established, with finely polished stone, the house of his servant, the well-mounted Sergius, through the zeal and efforts of the children of noble Theodore, who desired to have Sergius himself as their divine defender, he who spurned worldly authority, and accepted bitter tortures from head to foot. Although his feet were pierced with nails, he did not spare his head, but having given his spirit unto his master and saviour, he delivered it up to death, and in exchange for a worldly life, received his portion of celestial life.

The text is clearly divided into two main sections, with lines 7–8 functioning as a joint (naming the church's benefactors—the children of Theodore—and

54 Lintel inscription in honour of a church of St Sergius found in Azra' and transported to the theatre of Bostra, Mondésert (1960) 125–130; Key Fowden (1999) 110–111; Moralee (2006) 194ff.; transl. Key Fowden (1999) 110. The cult of St Sergius was very popular in the Hawrān in the fifth and sixth century, as has been magnificently illustrated by Key Fowden (1999). For other inscriptions, see e.g. IGLS XXI (5.1) 61, a prose inscription on the lintel above the western door of the main church in the village of Umm al-Surāb (see Key Fowden (1999) 109 and Bader (2009) 62–63); and IGLS XIII 1.9125 (Bostra) = A, p. 44 Alpi.

illustrating their special devotion to St George). The first section (ll. 1–6) describes the erection of the church, according to the binary structure we have already seen (opposition between νῦν and πρίν). The second section (ll. 9–13) offers a recapitulation of Sergius' martyrdom, showing that the *Passio* of the martyr circulated in the region.[55] Within this carefully arranged structure (6 + 1 + 1 + 5) the line with the donors' names occupies the central position, set between the name of the saint at the end of line 5 and at the beginning of l. 8. The word cωτήρ opens and closes the poem, inscribing it under the sign of the salvation given by God through the intercession of St Sergius. Furthermore, the diction is quite pretentious. The author knew the epic language,[56] although his metric is faulty and awkward, as the first editor rightly remarked.[57] But this is *our* point of view, which does not necessarily correspond to that of the contemporary audience. According to the intentions of the patrons, this was probably a good poetic inscription, with lines *looking like hexameters*. The audience, in my estimation, considered it a learned example of poetry, assuring social prestige to the donors of the church,[58] who aimed at being renowned in the community for their devotion, munificence and culture as well. The re-use of Homeric tags, albeit awkward, was probably coherent with this intention.

The same ideological background can be observed in another verse inscription on a lintel above the door to the church of St George, again in Azraʿ, *SGO*

55 See Mondésert (1960) 129 and Key Fowden (1999) 111. I provided a more detailed analysis of the text in Agosti (2017c) 236–238.

56 For line 3 ἐτέτυκτο, cf. *Il.* 5.901 et al.; for lines 3–5, cf. *Il.* 6.244–245 (Priam's δόμος) θάλαμοι ξεστοῖο λίθοιο / πλησίον ἀλλήλων δεδμημένοι; for lines 4–5, cf. *Il.* 24.798 πυκνοῖcιν λάεccι and *Od.* 10.211 ξεστοῖcιν λάεccι; for line 7, cf. *Od.* 13.432 κάλλεϊ καὶ ἔργοιcιν; for line 8 ἀρωγός, cf. *Il.* 4.235 et al.; for line 10, cf. κεφαλῆς ἄπο *Od.* 8.88. Mondésert (1960) 193 remarks: 'le rédacteur avait des lettres et connaissait ses classiques grecques, à commencer par Homère, ce dont on ne saurait s'étonner quand on sait la continuité dans cette région, particulièrement sous l'influence de certaines écoles comme celle de Gaza, de la culture grecque.'

57 If he actually wanted to make hexameters; Mondésert is perhaps right in suggesting that the verses structure was based on the number of syllables (Mondésert (1960) 127).

58 The prestige of displaying classical *paideia* will survive in some remarkable cases in the Byzantine Middle Ages. Probably the best example is the 12-lines high-quality epigram carved in the corner of the east front of the church of the Virgin (Skripou, Orchomenos, ninth century, GR98 Rhoby). Although the carving is not of particularly good quality, the text is a refined poem, an epic panegyric of the founder, Leo *Protospatharios*, extolling his merits and celebrating his power. Intended to be read aloud (cf. l. 3) by visitors who probably begun their circumambulation of the church from this point, as Amy Papalexandrou has persuasively argued, the inscription was a conscious exhibition of social status and power. See Papalexandrou (2001) and (2007); Prieto Dominguez (2013); Rhoby (2014) 319–324.



FIGURE 9.4 SGO *22/14/03* = IGLS XV 177.
PHOTO BY JULIEN ALIQUOT 2009 © PROGRAMME IGLS, CNRS/HISOMA.

22/14/03 = *IGLS* XV 177, and fig. 9.4.[59] The city councillor erected a *martyrium* to St George in 515, which was probably the first Christian temple in Azraʿ, built over a pagan temple.

θεοῦ γέγονεν οἶκος τὸ τῶν δαιμόνων καταγώγιον·|
φῶς cωτήριον ἔλαμψεν ὅπου cκότος ἐκάλυπτεν· |
ὅπου θυcίαι εἰδώλων, νῦν χοροὶ ἀγγέλων, κα[ὶ] |
ὅπου θεὸc παρωργίζετο, νῦν θεὸc ἐξευμενίζεται |
ἀνήρ τιc φιλόχριcτος, ὁ πρωτεύων Ἰωάννηc, Διομήδεως υἱός, |
ἐξ ἰδίων δῶρον θεῷ προcήνεγκεν ἀξιοθέατον κτίcμα, |
ἱδρύcαc ἐν τούτῳ τοῦ καλλινίκου ἁγίου μάρτυροc Γεωργίου |
τὸ τίμιον λίψανον, τοῦ φανέντοc αὐτῷ Ἰωάννηc |
οὐ καθ᾽ ὕπνον, ἀλλὰ φανερῶc· ἐν ἔτι θ′, ἔτουc υι′

The gathering place of demons has become the house of God. Saving light has illuminated where darkness concealed. Where [there were] sacrifices

59 Cf. Maas (1931) 11. The inscription is discussed by Lassus (1947) 140–141; Trombley (1995) II 363; Moralee (2006) 194; Alpi (2010) II 46; Agosti (2010) 180; transl. by Moralee (2006).

> of idols, now [there are] choirs of angels, where God was outraged, now God is propitiated. A certain Christ-loving man, the first of the city, John, son of Diomedes, from his own funds, as a gift to God, dedicated [this] attractive building, having set up in this place the revered relic of the splendidly victorious holy martyr George, who appeared to him, John, not in a dream, but openly. In indiction 9, year 410 [of the era of Provincia Arabia].

This is a complex text. The first four lines are actually an accentual hymn,[60] which sings the story of the edification of the church and the defeat of demons in the same binary mode that we have seen in St Theodore's inscriptions. It is followed at line 5 by a hexametric beginning (ἀνήρ τις φιλόχριστος, cf. Theocr. 23.1 ἀνήρ τις πολύφιλτρος), if not by an entire 'hexameter' (ἀνήρ τις φιλόχριστος, ὁ πρωτεύων Ἰωάννης). In itself, the epic wording at line 5 is not particularly surprising.[61] Presumably, the author wanted to emphasize the role of the donor by raising the level of diction.[62] Then prose lines follow, where the reader is informed that in a waking vision[63] the saint ordered John to build the church. The choice of a short liturgical hymn rather than a classicizing epigram is particularly remarkable and marks a strong detachment from the current late antique epigraphic habit.

We can fruitfully compare these two inscriptions with another dedication to St Sergius, found in what remains of the buildings of Dayr al-Qadi, *SGO* 22/36/04 (Jabal Hawrān, 300–600 CE). The building was a monastery dedicated to St George and the epigram was found over a door, at the main entrance:[64]

> Μείζονα τοῦ προτέροιο σὺν ἀσφαλέεσσι θεμέθλοις |
> εἰς ἔδαφος νεύοντα Γεώργιος οἶκον ἔγειρεν, |
> Ἀντιπάτρου γενετῆρος ἀμείνονα κόσμον ἀνύσας, |
> μάρτυρι Σεργίῳ περικαλλέα νηὸν ὀπάσσας. † |

60 = 11 Maas (1931). Moralee (2006) 195 observes that the verses are 'carefully arranged to depict, almost graphically' the movement from impurity to purity.

61 Other inscriptions, both funerary and epideictic, of Azra' show that the cultivated élite in the fifth and sixth century display some knowledge of Homeric poems.

62 Paratextual indications pointing out to the reader the different parts of the text are absent, nonetheless.

63 For the terminology, see Bodel (2009) 20 with further bibliography.

64 See IGLS 2412, with Waddington (1870) 548 ('au-dessus de la porte d'entrée du *deir*, à sa place originaire. Les lettres sont bien gravées et l'inscription est bien conservée') and Key Fowden (1999) 108.

> George has renovated the church, which was collapsing onto the soil, making it bigger than the previous one and with steady bases, accomplishing an ornament better than that of his father Antipater, offering a splendid temple to Sergius the martyr.

The author was able to write correct hexameters and re-employ the formulaic diction typical of building epigrams, such as οἶκον ἔγειρεν or κόσμον ἀνύσας. The last line, περικαλλέα νηὸν ὀπάσσας, apparently an epic tag, is actually another expression that had already entered inscriptional language.[65] In fact, it appears in the epigram celebrating the dedication of a church of St Michael in the mysterious Bothreptus (*AP* 1.9.2),[66] and in one of the two epigrams inscribed in the apse of the Blachernae (*AP* 1.3):

> Ὁ πρὶν Ἰουστῖνος περικαλλέα δείματο νηὸν
> τοῦτον μητρὶ Θεοῦ κάλλεϊ λαμπόμενον·
> ὁπλότερος δὲ μετ' αὐτὸν Ἰουστῖνος βασιλεύων
> κρείσσονα τῆς προτέρης ὤπασεν ἀγλαΐην.
>
> This beautiful church, shining with beauty, the earlier Justin built to the Mother of God. A later Justin during his reign endowed it with more than its former splendour.

The idea of surpassing the merits of the ancestors also appears in the epigram of St Polyeuctus, which together with the Blachernae epigram might even have exerted some influence on the author of the inscription in Zorava.[67] If this is true, apart from a possible clue to dating the inscription for St Sergius' church, we might have a nice example of the influence of epigraphic texts spreading from the capital into the periphery.

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65 Cp. IGLS XXI 2.145 τόνδε τὸν περικαλλῆ νεὸν; ναὸν περικαλλέα is already in *IG* II^2 3464 (third century BC). It will become very frequent in Byzantine literature.

66 The epigram extols the skilled Terradius, who was probably the architect. Most editors accept Waltz's emendation Gennadius, identifying him with patriarch of Constantinople from 457 to 478; but see Baldwin (1996) 96.

67 An impression which is somehow strengthened by the other epigram in the Apse of the Blachernae: *AP* 1.2.3–4 μητρὸς ἀπειρογάμοιο δόμον σκάζοντα νοήσας, / σαθρὸν ἀποσκεδάσας τεῦξέ μιν ἀσφαλέως ('finding that the temple of the Virgin Mother was tottering, took the decayed part to pieces and built it up again securely', transl. Paton-Tueller (2014)).

Reading Inscriptions before Entering the Church

There is a crucial question lurking behind all the texts discussed above, i.e. to what extent the audience was able to read and understand them. According to some scholars, metrical inscriptions were scarcely read and their function was essentially to convey the idea of social prestige, or even the 'magical' power of written, although incomprehensible signs. Others expressed more optimistic views, depending ultimately on a different idea of literacy in late antique society. Some epigraphists now point out the necessity of interpreting inscriptions as part of a complex, multisensory experience, placing greater emphasis on the monumental aspects of inscriptions, such as urban and epigraphic contexts, appearance, and visibility.[68] These aspects are even more relevant when we are dealing with metrical inscriptions, in my view. First and foremost, as epigraphic texts they had the pragmatic function of displaying and communicating information. The beholder was supposed not only to look at them but also to read them, probably in a sort of performance, as their arrangement often suggests.[69] For instance, reading them aloud and paying attention to paratextual indications (as crosses, blank spaces, dots, hederae etc.) could help to identify the verse structure and the content of epigrams arranged in a single continuous line. A nice example comes, once again, from Jerash, from the church of St John the Baptist (*I. Gerasa* 306 = 88a Michel = *SGO* 21/23/07, 531 CE). In front of the sanctuary, an inscription in the floor mosaic, within a *tabula ansata*, celebrates the beauty of the mosaic and the donors. The text is a poem in twelve dodecasyllables arranged in five continuous lines. Each verse-end is marked by a double dot punctuation:[70] the donor clearly wanted the readers to recognize the metrical structure.

68 See the perceptive remarks by Graham (2013) 386 ('for the ancient viewer, reading a monumental inscription meant not only reading the text but also visually experiencing the monument as a whole'), and by Eastmond (2015) 2 ('inscriptions are not just disembodied words that can be studied in isolation. Instead they must be considered as material entities, whose meaning is determined as much by their physical qualities as by their contents … in addition to their contents, the ways in which words were presented to onlookers is a key source of information and a generator of meaning that should not be ignored').

69 I expressed my own views in Agosti (2010) and (2015a). For Byzantine inscriptions, see now Rhoby (2017) calling also the attention to the importance of 'signal words' and paratextual signs as a mean of attracting readers.

70 See Welles in Kraeling (1938) 479; both Michel (2001) and *SGO* did not report it.

Conclusion

To sum up, metrical inscriptions placed at the entrances of churches not only had the function of preparing the encounter between the believer and the church, or in some cases of introducing the viewer to the beauty of the temple (the 'ekphrastic mode'): they also re-enacted the defeat of paganism, both as religion and culture (the 'ideological mode'). If the poems, especially the high-brow-style poems, were primarily addressing ideal readers able to understand their complex language,[71] their pragmatic communicative functions were not limited to the upper class. In fact, in any late antique Roman city inscriptions, carved on public buildings, on the bases of the statues, etc., were part of everyday life. Inscribing them in religious Christian buildings was often a way of pointing out the contrast with pagan and municipal epigraphic habits. Verses added something more. They showed that pagan *paideia* was defeated, both reversing and transforming 'Homeric' language, and adopting the diction of new Christian poetry. Given the symbolism connected to the act of entering a church, it is evident that inscriptions placed in the liminal zone were meant to be part of this moment so full of meaning to every worshipper. It is not necessary to imagine that people entering churches stopped every time to read the inscriptions. Probably their content was widely known, either through the performance in the occasion of annual feasts, or thanks to readers in the churches who explained the inscriptions to illiterate people.[72] In any case, their presence conveyed a sense of victory over the past and proclaimed the new world of the Christian *paideia*.

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71 We shall also to take into account the function of Greek *paideia* as common language of the upper class, and as a way of communicating with pagan élites.

72 For the sources, see Agosti (2015b) 24–25.

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CHAPTER 10

The Door to the Sanctuary from Paulinus of Nola to Gregory of Tours

Enduring Characteristics and Evolutions from the Theodosian to the Merovingian Period[1]

Gaëlle Herbert de la Portbarré-Viard

The door to the sanctuary is an ambiguous architectural element which is related to two contrasting notions, that of opening and of closing: at the same time, it joins and separates spaces, for it can alternately both welcome and protect people into a sacred place and prevent people of access to the same sacred place. Thereby, the door to the sanctuary is very similar to city gates. In pagan temples, entrances to sanctuaries are often given a monumental appearance thanks to other buildings (stairs, propylons and courtyards in front of temples).[2] The same specifications may be found in Christian architecture, and F.W. Deichmann, for example, showed how this part of Christian building, is enriched with highly symbolic and allegorical semantic connotations. The New Testament gives a theological justification to the gates of Christian building by making them the allegory of the Son of God, since Jesus Christ introduces Himself through (thanks to) the image of the Door:

> Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep.
> All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers;
> But the sheep did not hear them.
> I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved,
> And shall go in and out, and find pasture.[3]

1 After the publication of my book on Paulinus of Nola in 2006, I extended the scope of my research on descriptions of Christian buildings to other authors, such as Gregory of Tours. Within the framework of the Amsterdam conference, I reconsidered the question of the door to the sanctuary in the literary and architectural works of Paulinus, putting it in a more general literary, historical and diachronic perspective and trying to highlight enduring characteristics and evolutions of the door to the sanctuary from the Theodosian period (Paulinus) to the Merovingian period (Gregory).

2 See Wescoat and Ousterhout (2012) with several articles about monumental accesses to sanctuaries and chapter 11 by Williamson in this volume.

3 John 10.7–9. Translation from the King James Bible online (www.kingjamesbibleonline.org).

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Christian monuments and literature reflect in various ways and at various times, as early as Late Antiquity, the soteriological and spiritual meaning of the door to the sanctuary. In Paleochristian architecture, the best-known materializations of the door to the sanctuary in Western Europe may probably be found in the wooden doors of the church of St Sabina in Rome,[4] carved with biblical episodes, miraculously preserved until today, and in those of Sant' Ambrogio in Milan, from which only pieces remain.

The aim of this paper is to study, through some textual examples, the presence and the meanings of the door to the sanctuary in the works of Paulinus of Nola and in the works of Gregory of Tours. Paulinus was a Bordeaux-born aristocrat converted to ascetic Christianism,[5] who at the beginning of the fifth century CE financed the renovation, restructuration and extension of the basilical complex dedicated to St Felix, situated in the *suburbium* of Nola (Campania).[6]

This basilical complex, built in a necropolis dating back to the end of the second century CE, is exceptionally interesting for the history of ancient Christian architecture and painting. Together with archaeological data from the excavations of the last thirty years in Cimitile/Nola,[7] the literary and spiritual testimony of Paulinus in his poems and in his letters clearly shows an extraordinarily complex attempt to set up an architectural and decorative program at the service of the Christian faith.[8] In this program, the doors to the sanctuary, a place of transition from the worldly to the divine, play a highly important role. About two centuries later, Gregory of Tours,[9] a builder-bishop as Paulinus was and deeply involved in Tours, his hometown and a pilgrimage city, gave us in his *History of the Franks* and in his hagiographic works precious accounts about Christian buildings, mostly in Merovingian Gaul. In Gregory's texts, the doors of the sanctuary still facilitate the passage from the secular to the spiritual world, but with the expansion of the cult of the saints and in the troubled historical context of Merovingian Gaul, other meanings, which were present in a lesser way in Paulinus' works, gained in importance. A case in point is the association between the door to the sanctuary and miraculous healings and their protective purpose in a violent political and social context.

We will present here a synthetic comment about the main architectural and symbolical meanings of the door to the sanctuary in Paulinus' writings,

4 Spieser (2001) 1–24.

5 For a general view of the life and the works of Paulinus, see Trout (1999).

6 See the two chapters about Paulinus of Nola in Brown (2012).

7 See Ebanista (2003) and Lehmann (2004).

8 See Herbert de la Portbarré-Viard (2006a).

9 On Gregory, see for example Wood (2002) and most recently Heinzelmann (2015).

confronting them with archaeological data. Then, we will carry on with what this structuring element has become about two centuries later in the texts of Gregory that reflect a very different world, where the functions of the door have multiplied and diversified. The terms used to establish our textual corpus have been selected from the work of Callebat and Fleury about the Vitruvian vocabulary which normalizes in a way the architectural vocabulary in ancient Latin classic texts:[10] *foris* (double-leaf-door); *ianua* (entrance door); *ostium* (gateway); *ualuae* (door leaf); *porta* (word associated with sanctuaries and defensive works); *ingressus* (entrance); *limen* (threshold). All these terms are used by both Paulinus of Nola and Gregory of Tours. Besides these words, Paulinus of Nola also uses the term *arcus* to designate the vaulted doors which give access into the basilicas dedicated to St Felix,[11] as we shall see. Christian writers, when insisting on the monumental aspect of the entrance of the sanctuary, also use the ancient terms *atrium* and *uestibulum* with new meanings, both referring to a sort of courtyard in front of the church.

The Sanctuary Door as Perceived by Paulinus of Nola: A Crucial Part in the Architectural Construction of Cimitile / Nola and Its Textual Representation

Paulinus of Nola describes the above-mentioned basilical complex about one century after the famous description of the church of Tyre by Eusebius of Caesarea in Book 10 of the *Ecclesiastical History*—which would serve as a model not only for Paulinus' description (see below), but for many other descriptions of Christian buildings. Paulinus' description can be found in several passages, in *Carmina* 27 and 28 (a kind of panegyric of St Felix), as well as in *Epistle* 32 (addressed to his friend, Sulpicius Severus). Beyond their symbolic meaning, Paulinus thinks the basilica doors dedicated to St Felix play a fundamental part in the architecture of the sanctuary. He mainly alludes to the doors of both basilicas: the old one, which was built prior to his settling in Nola, and the new one he commissioned himself. Both series of doors were built face to face. Here we only provide the data needed to understand the subject of the paper, and we invite readers to consult the books mentioned above for further information. The map of the sanctuary at the time of the extensive construction work supervised by Paulinus in the years 401–403 helps to understand the general data on the basilical complex in Cimitile / Nola. Paulinus began by restoring the first basilica dedicated to Felix of Nola (*basilica*

10 Callebat and Fleury (1995). For the uses of *foris, ostium, ianua* et *ualuae* in the works of Paulinus, see Herbert de la Portbarré-Viard (2006a) 546, 548 and 552.

11 Herbert de la Portbarré-Viard (2006a) 542.

vetus coded *bv* on the map), a building which included a first 'aula di culto' ('af'[12] on the map) built around the saint's grave in the fourth century. Then he commissioned the construction of a big basilica with three naves (*basilica noua*, 'bn' on the map) facing to the same tomb. The two basilicas were separated by a narrow courtyard ('tr' on the map), and were interconnected by opening two series of three doors built face to face. Above these doors, versified inscriptions[13] could be read on, designated by the term *titulus* commonly used for epigraphic poems.[14] Paulinus passed these inscriptions on to us in his *Epistle* 32. The archaeologist T. Lehmann, an expert in the field, identified the position of some of these *tituli* thanks to Paulinus' texts. They are represented by the capitals G, H, I, K, L, M, N, O on the map.[15] Together, the doors of the sanctuary and the epigrams offer a privileged way to understand the complex monumental project of Paulinus, as will be shown below.

The Sanctuary Door as a Space of Transition between the Human and Divine Worlds

In particular two inscriptions[16] by Paulinus reveal that the door to the sanctuary dedicated to Felix of Nola was perceived as a space of transition between the human and divine worlds:

> Alterae autem basilicae qua de hortulo uel pomario quasi priuatus aperitur ingressus, hi uersiculi hanc secretiorem forem pandunt:
>
> Caelestes intrate uias per amoena uirecta, (E)
> Christicolae; et laetis decet huc ingressus ab hortis,
> Vnde sacrum meritis datur exitus in Paradisum.
>
> Hoc idem ostium aliis uersibus ab interiore sui fronte signatur:
>
> Quisque domo Domini perfectis ordine uotis (F)
> Egrederis, remea corpore, corde mane.

12 Aula Felicis.

13 On the tradition of writing inscriptions for doors of Christian sanctuaries, see for example Deichmann (1993) 93 and Agosti in this volume (chapter 9).

14 Paulinus himself uses it, as we will see below.

15 See Lehmann (2004) Tafel 20, Abb. 27; G, H and I are above the doors of the new basilica (bn) and J, K, L, M, N and O above those of the old basilica (bv).

16 Paul. Nol. *Ep.* 32.12. On the difficulties of identifying both inscriptions, see Herbert de la Portbarré-Viard (2006a) 148–150 and Lehmann (2004) 175, who maintains they do not belong to the new basilica built by Paulinus.

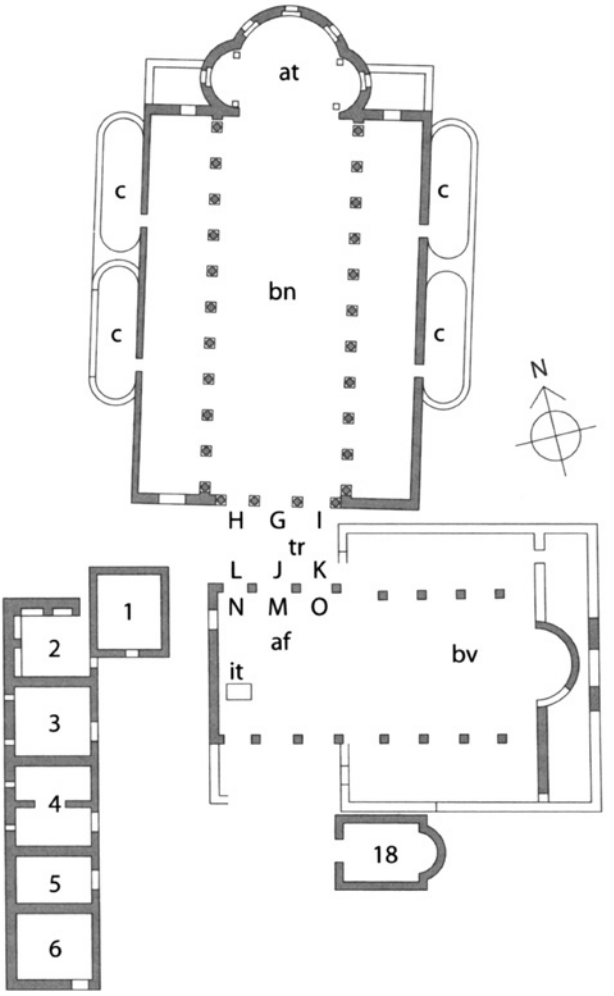


FIGURE 10.1 *Map of the sanctuary of St Felix at Nola at the time of the extensive construction work supervised by Paulinus in the years 401–403.*
REPRODUCES BY THE COURTESY OF T. LEHMAN, WITH ADAPTATIONS.

1–6 mausoleums (second-third century CE)
af the first *aula di culto* of the Constantinian era
bn *basilica nova* (the new basilica built by Paulinus in honour of St Felix, dedicated in 403 CE)
bv *basilica vetus* (the first basilica built around St Felix's tomb during the third part of fourth century CE)
it St Felix's tomb
tr courtyard between af, bv and bn (also called *transenna* by T. Lehmann)
G–O letters indicating the location of the inscriptions (*tituli*) above the entrances to the two basilicas and given in §§12–15 of *Epistle* 32
at apse of the new basilica (bn)
c *cubicula* (small rooms located on the long sides of the basilica)

> At the side now where, as it were, a private entrance, gives access to the other basilica from a little garden or orchard, these verses open this more distant door:
>
> Enter, worshippers of Christ, the heavenly roads along lovely
> brushwood; (E)
> Entering here from a gay garden is very seemly too,
> For hence an exit is given, as reward for merit, to holy Paradise.
>
> This same little archway is marked with other verses on its inner side:
>
> All ye who, after having duly performed your prayers, (F)
> leave the house of the Lord, return with your bodies but remain there
> with your hearts.[17]

In the first inscription, 'a gay garden' and 'the holy Paradise' suggest to the faithful, beyond the movement from the outside to the inside of the church, a symbolic passage from the earthly garden to the garden of Eden. This passage is highlighted by the—at first sight paradoxical—link between the term *ingressus* and the preposition *ab* (*ab hortis*), and between the term *exitus* and the preposition *in* (*in Paradisum*). But we better understand Paulinus' lines, if we come to think that the entrance of the faithful into the church is at the same time a departure from the earthly world and a prefiguration of the access to eternal life, following another meaning of *exitus*, death, which may also mean the birth into the celestial world.

Unlike with other inscriptions, it is extremely difficult to link *titulus* E with what we know about Cimitile / Nola. However, when Paulinus introduces the verses ('Alterae autem … forem pandunt', see above), he gives the reader significant clues which are worth understanding, because they can be linked to the terms of *titulus* E alluding to the heavenly garden. We shall briefly recall here some of our previous conclusions.[18] The *alterae basilicae* could be the old basilica ('bv' on the map),[19] given that the two previous inscriptions written by Paulinus in *Epistle* 32 were, according to their author, located on the door of the new church.[20] It is particularly difficult to identify the *hortulus uel*

17 Translation Goldschmidt (1940), modified.

18 See Herbert de la Portbarré-Viard (2006a) 148–153.

19 Given that the word 'basilica' is polysemic in Paulinus' works, it is impossible to be certain of this meaning.

20 See Herbert de la Portbarré-Viard (2006a) 145–16. These two *tituli* are not identified on the map by T. Lehmann: according to him they were linked to two other unidentified entrances in the façade of the basilica built by Paulinus, see Lehmann (2004) 186.

pomarium from which this *secretior foris*, which seems to be located at a certain distance from the main door of the building, opens into the basilica. Since a garden or an orchard is not a building, locating it in an archaeological area dating back more than 1,600 years is problematic. So, the writings of Paulinus himself can help us, because in *Carmen* 18.131–137, composed in 400 CE, three years before *Epistle* 32, he describes in depth St Felix's funeral and the garden where he was buried.

While introducing allegorically the place where Felix was buried, Paulinus gives the reader an image of a paradisiac nature. In a certain way, these lines echo archaeological data, since the saint is known to have been entombed in a brick grave in a garden, and this tomb to be the origin of the sanctuary.[21] Conversely, the poet does not allude to the big necropolis located in the area.[22] We can nevertheless suppose that Paulinus, while localizing *titulus* E by referring to a 'little garden' or an 'orchard', recalls a burial area situated near Felix's grave, and consequently near the church which contains it ('bv' on map). This space was what remained from the 'little garden', and enabled the faithful to reach one of the entrances of the old basilica.[23]

The second inscription, F ('Quisque domo … corde mane', see above),[24] focusses on the spiritual journey of pilgrims. A chiasmus in the second line clarifies the distinction between spiritual and geographical traveling. Even if the faithful leaves the church, spiritually, he remains on the spot.

The Function of Sanctuary Doors and the Flows of Light Permeating the Basilical Complex of Cimitile / Nola: Structuring a Sacred Space

In *Epistle* 32, Paulinus also presents the doors of the basilicas as a way of structuring the sacred space by the means of light when they are open:[25]

> … Laetissimo uero conspectu tota simul haec basilica in basilicam memorati confessoris aperitur trinis arcubus paribus perlucente transenna, per quam uicissim sibi tecta ac spatia basilicae utriusque iunguntur. Nam quia nouam a ueteri paries abside cuiusdam monumenti interposita obstructus excluderet, totidem ianuis patefactis a latere confessoris, quot a fronte ingressus sui foribus noua reserabatur, quasi diatritam speciem ab utraque in utramque spectantibus praebet, sicut datis inter utrasque

21 See Herbert de la Portbarré-Viard (2006a) 12–13.

22 See above.

23 See Herbert de la Portbarré-Viard (2006a) 152, n. 260.

24 See above.

25 Paul. Nol. *Ep.* 32.13.

ianuas titulis indicatur. Itaque in ipsis basilicae nouae ingressibus hi uersiculi sunt:

Alma domus triplici patet ingredientibus arcu
Testaturque piam ianua trina fidem. (G)

... It is a splendid sight, the way in which this basilica suddenly in its entirety opens in the direction of the basilica of the renowned confessor in three similar arches with a lattice, pervious to light, by which the buildings and the spaces of the two churches are connected. For because the wall, built in by the intervening apse of a certain monument, would separate the new church from the old one, it was opened from the confessor's side by as many gateways as the number of doors which this new church had on the side of its entrance, and thus this wall gives a vista, which might be called open-work, from one church into the other, as is indicated by the inscriptions placed between the two rows of gates. Consequently, there are just above the entrances of the new church the following lines:

The omnibenedictory house is open with triple arch to those entering
and this threefold doorway bears testimony to pious faith. (G)[26]

The opening of the two basilicas dedicated to St Felix, the old one ('bv' on map) and the new one ('bn' on map), leading from the one into the other by the two series of three doors designated by the term *arcus* (arch-shaped door) on the front of each one, has been evidenced by archaeology. However, only the three doors of *basilica uetus* have been preserved until today,[27] and the inscriptions (*tituli*) K, L, M, N, O were to be found above them, according to T. Lehmann's reconstruction. Although we do not have the three doors of the *basilica nova*, we do know about their location, giving access to *basilica noua*,[28] the place where the two colonnades framing the central nave stopped. The inscriptions (*tituli*) G, H, I were located above them, according to T. Lehmann.

26 Translation Goldschmidt (1940).

27 See Lehmann (2004) 43 and Herbert de la Portbarré-Viard (2006a) 171.

28 The new basilica built by Paulinus collapsed in the late Middle Ages, and only some remains of the colonnade of the central nave are preserved until today, together with the apse. During the fourteenth century this apse was included in the small Gothic church of San Giovanni. See for example Herbert de la Portbarré-Viard (2006a) 15.

As inscription G (given above) explains that the two three-door entrances refer to the dogma of the Holy Trinity. However, the close link between the spaces of the old and new basilicas also refers to the unity of the two Testaments and to the unity of Paulinus' architectural project. Although we cannot analyse in detail here the spiritual meaning of his project, it should be remembered that linking the dogma of the Trinity to the unity of the two Testaments is an image built on the figure of Christ who is a part of the Trinity as well as the 'new Adam'. The baptism of Christ (a symbolic death referring to Christ's death and resurrection) allows the ancient man to be linked to the new man, and the ancient Law to the new Law.

In Paulinus' architectural project, the flow of light through the basilicas plays an important role, because light symbolizes the presence of Christ and the unity of the faithful. Nevertheless, in order to link the two churches, it was necessary to demolish the apse of a previous building which was located between them (see above the passage introducing *titulus* 'g'). Thanks to archaeological excavations, it was possible to identify this previous building with the first *aula di culto* ('af' on map) built around Felix's grave, given that this building had an apse, the foundations of which were discovered at the entrance of *basilica uetus*[29] opened by Paulinus to give access to the new one.

Symbolic and Spiritual Meanings of the Sanctuary Doors in the Descriptions of the Basilical Complex of Cimitile / Nola, a Place of Pilgrimage

We will merely study two *tituli* of *Epistle* 32, J and M on the map, located above the entrances leading to the old church dedicated to St Felix: they do not only play an important part in the architectural structuration of the basilical complex, but they are also concerned with symbolic and spiritual meanings of the door itself. The first one, *titulus* J (8 lines) is a theological apology for the link between the doors of the churches dedicated to Felix of Nola, the old one and the new one.[30] We will quote only lines 1–4, given immediately after the localization of the inscription:

> … e regione basilicae nouae super medianum arcum hi uersus sunt:
>
> Vt medium ualli, pax nostra, resoluit Iesus
> Et, cruce discidium perimens, duo fecit in unum,

29 This entrance is located where T. Lehmann has identified the *tituli* J to O. See map and Lehmann (2004) 42–46 and Tafel 19, Abb. 26.

30 Paul. Nol. *Ep.* 32.15.

> Sic noua destructo ueteris discrimine tecti
> Culmina conspicimus portarum foedere iungi. (J)
>
> … there are in the direction of the new basilica over the central arch these verses:
>
> As Jesus, our peace, hath broken down the middle of the wall of partition,
> and destroying the division through the cross, hath made both one,
> so we see that the new edifices, as a result of the partitioning old building having been
> demolished, are joined by the pact of the doors. […] (J)[31]

In these four lines,[32] Paulinus provides an exegetical interpretation of the works he commissioned in order to create an architectural link between the two churches dedicated to Felix, the old one and the new one built by himself: in these works, the demolition of the apse of the Constantinian *aula di culto* (see above) plays an essential part. He builds this spiritual interpretation on an analogy between a passage of the epistle of Paul to the Ephesians (2.14–16), on the one hand, alluding to the fact that two peoples (the Jews and Pagans) were made one thanks to the Crucifixion which resulted in the birth of a new man:[33]

> ipse est enim pax nostra qui fecit utraque unum et medium parietem maceriae soluens inimicitiam in carne sua legem mandatorum decretis euacuans ut duos condat in semet ipsum in unum nouum hominem faciens pacem et reconciliet ambos in uno corpore Deo per crucem interficiens inimicitiam in semet ipso […].
>
> For he [Christ] is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition *between us*; (15) Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, *even* the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, *so* making peace; (16) And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby […][34]

31 Translation Goldschmidt (1940), modified.

32 For further details, see Herbert de la Portbarré-Viard (2006a) 189–191.

33 Ed. Fischer e.a. (1975).

34 Transl. www.kingjamesbibleonline.org.

and the works in the basilical complex on the other hand, which resulted in the link between the two churches: 'Sic noua destructo ueteris discrimine tecti / Culmina conspicimus portarum foedere iungi'. By using a comparative system (*ut … sic*) in order to establish a parallel between the works he commissioned and the apostolic word, Paulinus gives these same works a spiritual justification. The expression *portarum foedere* ('the pact of the doors') is particularly important here, because it stresses the necessity of unifying the two churches and it justifies the demolition of the apse of the old monument we have already alluded to. Other symbolic and spiritual meanings in the doors of the sanctuary at Cimitile / Nola are present in other inscriptions (*tituli*), and the whole set of inscriptions constitutes a sort of visual and scriptural catechism.[35]

Let us now look at *titulus* M, which, besides providing spiritual meanings, is linked to the sanctuary as a place of pilgrimage. Giving access to a large number of faithful is a necessity which is kept in mind by Paulinus, and especially in the three first lines of *titulus* M located above the middle door of the old basilica,[36] but inside the church (see M on the map):

> Item in isdem arcubus a fronte, quae ad basilicam domini Felicis patet, mediana, hi sunt:
>
> Quos deuota fides densis celebrare beatum
> Felicem populis diuerso suadet ab ore,
> Per triplices aditus laxos infudite coetus;
>
> Likewise on the same arches on the middle of the bows facing the basilica of our Felix, the following lines:
>
> Ye whose devout faith induces you to revere blessed
> Felix, in dense throngs from different entrances,
> pour your dispersed crowds in through the triple entry. […] (M)[37]

Paulinus' verses express the crucial part played by the doors as masses of pilgrims move into the sanctuary, as we can see too in a passage of *Carmen* 28 (404)[38] dedicated to the space between the two basilicas (see 'tr' on map):

35 See Herbert de la Portbarré-Viard (2006a) 186–208.

36 Paul. Nol. *Ep.* 32.15.

37 Translation Goldschmidt (1940).

38 Paul. Nol. *Carm.* 28.37–40.

Basilicis haec iuncta tribus patet area cunctis,
diuersosque aditus ex uno pandit ad omnes,
atque itidem gremio diuersos excipit uno
a tribus egressus, medio spatiosa pauito;

This court is connected with all three basilicas
and from one point it offers admittance to them all in various directions,
and likewise it receives exits from various directions from all three in one lap,
spacious with its paved central part.[39]

Identifying two of the three basilicas mentioned in the quotation, the old basilica of Felix ('bv' on the map) and the new one ('bn' on the map) is a simple task, but identifying a third one is much more difficult, as I wrote elsewhere.[40] Suffice it to say that in these few lines Paulinus introduces the space between the old basilica and the new one as a major place in order to unify the different buildings of the sanctuary. And inside this place the doors, successively called *diuersos aditus* and *diuersos … egressus*, play an essential part, since the continuous flow of pilgrims moves in and out.

The Monumentalisation of Sanctuaries Doors in Paulinus of Nola: The Case of the Second Courtyard of the Basilical Complex of St Felix

In the writings of Paulinus of Nola, the monumentalisation of the entrance to the sanctuary[41] is a link between early Christian architecture and pagan sanctuaries. This monumentalisation would expand with the intensification of the practice of pilgrimage, and consequently, as the crowd of the faithful increased, would develop into in what may be called 'sanctuary-cities'. When thinking about monumental entrances to basilicas, one can remember the church of Tyre as described by Eusebius of Caesarea or the Constantinian basilica of St Peter in Rome, alluded to elsewhere by Paulinus,[42] but according to a passage of *Carmen* 28, the basilical complex dedicated to St Felix also possessed a monumental entrance:

39 Translation Goldschmidt (1940).

40 See Herbert de la Portbarré-Viard (2006) 391–392.

41 See Sapin (2002), and chapter 1 by van Opstall in the present volume.

42 Eus. *HE* 10.4.38 and Paul. Nol. *Ep.* 13.11. See also in this volume the contribution by de Blaauw (chapter 6).

Parte alia patet exterior quae cingitur aeque
area porticibus, cultu minor, aequore maior.
Ante sacras aedes longe spectabile pandit
uestibulum, duplici quae extructis tegmine cellis
per contextarum coeuntia tigna domorum
castelli speciem meditatur imagine muri
conciliisque forum late spatiabile pandit.

On the other side lies an outer court, less decorated, with a larger surface area, which is also surrounded by porticoes. In front of the sacred buildings a fore-court is displayed visible from afar, and with its cells built in the upper-storey, it gives, in consequence of the junction of the beams of the connected houses, hence the aspect presented by the walls, the appearance of a citadel. For assemblies, it offers a meeting-place with ample opportunity to stroll.[43]

Paulinus obviously knew Eusebius' description,[44] and in this text he describes, with terms that recall in a certain way Eusebius' wordings, the monumental entrance which the whole pilgrimage-city was about to show to the eyes of pilgrims arriving from far away.[45] After this short analysis of presence and aim of the doors of the sanctuary in Paulinus' works, let us examine the same doors as perceived by Gregory of Tours two centuries later.

The Spiritual and Symbolic Meanings of the Sanctuary Door as Perceived by Gregory of Tours

In his historical and hagiographic writings, which provide an exceptional account of the Merovingian period, Gregory of Tours offers the reader an image of sanctuary doors which is often very different from that in the texts of Paulinus. Complex symbolic and spiritual meanings partly vanish, and the realities of contemporary society are given special prominence. In a passage of the *History of the Franks*, Gregory alludes to the lines composed by Martin of Braga, the apostle of the Sueves, for a basilica dedicated to Martin of Tours, with words

43 Paul. Nol. *Carm.* 28.23–59. Translation Goldschmidt (1940) modified.

44 Herbert de la Portbarré-Viard (2006a) 408–409.

45 On this monumental entrance (not located on the map, because the location depends on textual indications that will not be analyzed here), see Herbert de la Portbarré-Viard (2006a) 405–412.

that recall the inscriptions composed by Paulinus for the basilicas of Nola[46]—but he does not quote the text of the inscriptions, as if they were not essential to introduce the church. Nevertheless, in Gregory's writings the spiritual significance of the door to the sanctuary still exists and is related in particular to the accomplishment of miracles. In his hagiographic texts, sanctuary doors and their thresholds delimit a space which belongs at the same time to the temporal and to the spiritual. Within this space astonishing and even miraculous events, linked to the saint's power, can happen. For example, animals become quiet as soon as they cross the threshold of the basilica of St Julian at Brioude.[47] Gregory also narrates how a few bulls, after having pushed their way through a crowd of pilgrims, kiss the altar and then leave. Additionally, we can quote another passage of the *Life of St Julian* in which the door to the saint's basilica opens and closes to give way to a miraculous being who will cover the inside and the outside of the saint's shrine with roses.[48] There is another passage in the *Liber in gloria martyrum* in which in the basilica of St Peter in Bordeaux, an old woman is the eyewitness of the miraculous apparition of St Stephen between the opening and the closing of the door during the night.[49] But saints do not only descend miraculously on earth, they also perpetuate Christ's healings there, as we will see below.

The association between the door to the sanctuary and miraculous healing, which refers to Christ as a saviour and a healer, is very frequent in the writings of Gregory of Tours. We can quote various examples, such as the healing of a blind and paralytic woman,[50] and a patient (whose wife had already recovered)[51] in front of the door to the basilica of St Martin in Tours and the wood of the door to the basilica of St Medard in Soissons, which miraculously healed the toothache of one of king Childebert's *referendarii*.[52]

In the writings of Gregory, sanctuary doors reinforce the hagiographic theme of healer saints and all the elements of the marvellous, which in hagiographic narratives take on a historical value. Yet, at the same time, they also have the function of delimiting the area in which the saint's power irradiates.[53]

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46 See *Hist. Franc.* 5.37: 'Versiculos qui super ostium sunt a parte meridiana in basilica sancti Martini ipse composuit' ('it was he who composed the verses over the southern portal of the church of St Martin'; translation Thorpe (1974).

47 Greg. Tur. *Iul.* 31.127.

48 Greg. Tur. *Iul.* 46b.

49 Greg. Tur. *Glor. mart.* 33.

50 *Mart.* 1.39, see above.

51 *Mart.* 2.10.

52 Greg.Tur. *Glor.Conf.* 93.

53 I thank Professor Pascal Boulhol for directing my attention to this subject.

The association between miraculous healings and sanctuaries and sanctuary doors in particular is a continuation of the pagan past.[54] It was of course already present in the writings of Paulinus of Nola at the beginning of the fifth century CE,[55] because Saint Felix is a healer saint whose hagiography Paulinus writes,[56] but the association does not seem to have the same prominence in Paulinus' as it has in Gregory's works.

In the writings of Gregory, there are numerous associations between sanctuary doors and other miracles as well. I will quote two of them in which a miracle is happening between the closing and the opening of doors.[57] In the basilica dedicated to Valerianus, the first bishop of Saint-Lizier, the miraculous increase of wine in one jar reveals the tomb of the saint:

> Impleuitque duas ampullas uino et posuit super unum quodque tumulum, dicens: 'In quo Falerna fuerint ampliata, ipsam manifestum est esse Valeri antistitis sepulturam.' Data uero luce egressus de basilica, ostia sigillis munita, dedit membra sopori. Surgens autem ad horam tertiam, uenit ad sanctam basilicam, reseratis ostiis, cum clero et populo. Repperit ampullam unam parumper uinum habentem; aliam uero in tantum ore patulo exundare, totum beati pontificis ablueret monimentum. Per hoc enim cognouit sacerdos, quis esset Valeri episcopi tumulus.
>
> He [bishop Theodorus] filled two jars with wine and placed one on each tomb; he said: 'It is obvious that the tomb of bishop Valerius is the one in whose [jar] the Falerian wine is increased'. At daybreak he left the church, had the doors secured with seals, and gave his limbs to sleep. At the third hour he got up, went to the holy church with the clergy and the people, and opened the doors. He found that one jar had very little wine, but that the other so overflowed from its open mouth that it spilled over the entire monument of the blessed bishop. In this way bishop Theodorus learned which was the tomb of bishop Valerius.[58]

There is also the miracle of the water in the baptistery of the plain of Osset in Lusitania:

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54 See also chapter 4 by Csepregi in the present volume.

55 See for example the autobiographical testimony of Paulinus in *Carm.* 21.368–372.

56 See for example Luongo (1998) and Herbert de la Portbarré-Viard (2006b).

57 See too for example *Glor. Conf.* 102.

58 *Glor. Conf.* 83. Translation van Dam (1988a).

> Tunc data oratione sacerdos, ostia templi iubent simul muniri signaculis, aduentum uirtutis dominicae praestolantes. Die autem tertia, quod est sabbati, conuenientibus ad baptizandum populis, adueniens episcopus cum ciuibus suis, inspectis signaculis, ostia reserat clausa. Ac mirum dictu, piscinam quam reliquerant uacuam, repperiunt plenam, sed ita cumulo altiore refertam, ut solet super ora modiorum triticum adgregari; uideasque huc illucque latices fluctuare nec parte in diuersa defluere …
>
> Then the bishop offered a prayer, and they ordered the door of the shrine to be sealed shut and awaited the arrival of the Lord's power. Three days later on the sabbath (Easter Saturday), people gathered for baptism. The bishop came with the citizens and after inspecting the seals opened the doors that had been closed. (What had happened) is extraordinary to report! The pool they had left empty they now found full. The pool was packed with a high mass of water, just as wheat is usually piled over the mouths of bushel baskets. You could see waves rippling here and there which did not spill over the other side.[59]

In both texts, the closing and the re-opening of the doors guarantee the reality of the miracle.

Enduring Characteristics and Metamorphoses of the Door to the Sanctuary in Gregory of Tours

The presence of sanctuary doors in Gregory's hagiographical accounts is linked to the rooting of these stories in places of pilgrimage and urban contexts which were often damaged by political troubles. In the works of the famous historian, sanctuary doors are at once places of enduring characteristics and of metamorphoses.

The Sanctuary Door and Pilgrimage

Sanctuary doors in the works of Gregory sometimes refer to the spatial organisation of the cult of the saints. We can see this in a passage of the *History of the Franks*, where Gregorius, when he gives the number of doors of the basilica of St Martin in Tours, seems to be concerned (as Paulinus before him) with guiding the flows of pilgrims into the basilica: 'Habet […] ostia 8, tria in altario, quinque in capso' ('It [the basilica] has … eight doorways, three in

59 Greg. Tur. *Mart.* 23. Translation van Dam (1988b).

the sanctuary and five in the nave').[60] On the same subject, one could equally quote the Gregory's description of the church of Namatius in Clermont.[61]

Looking at the door to the sanctuary also reminds us of the importance of entrances into pilgrimage basilicas, through which a great number of pilgrims passed, from various sociological backgrounds. These entrances, situated in front of the sanctuary, often courtyard-shaped, are indicated in Christian texts by the terms *atrium* and *uestibulum.*[62] We have seen above how Paulinus of Nola used the second of them to describe the probably monumental entrance into the basilical complex of St Felix. Conversely, in order to denote this same reality, Gregory does not use *uestibulum*, but *atrium / atria*. A lot of the many occurrences of the term *atrium* in Gregory's works refer to the basilica of St Martin in Tours,[63] apparently alluding to a very large space which 'lied down in many directions all around the basilica.'[64] This space was entirely or partly portico-lined, and many building opened into it.[65] Most of the time, in Gregory's writings, the term *atrium* occurs without any descriptive element. He often shows the space of the *atrium* and of its porticoes as an asylum for various people: drunkards, patients, poor. In the *Liber uitae patrum*, for example, the *atrium* of the church dedicated to Maximin, bishop of Trier, welcomes sleeping drunkards.[66] In the *Liber de uirtutibus sancti Martini*, particularly, the *atrium* is a place for healing.[67] Paulinus of Nola, at the beginning of the fifth century, already worried about drinking bouts which took place in the basilical complex dedicated to St Felix, during his feast.[68] But the number of people standing in the *atria* of the basilicas seems to have increased with the expansion of the cult of the saints. Alluding to 'a law of 431 preventing refugees from sleeping inside a basilica' N. Gauthier makes a comparison between the late antique church atria and 'Latin American train stations and other semi-public places of the Third World.'[69] Besides pilgrimages, sanctuary entrances are often linked by Gregory to urban space, whether the church be *intra* or *extra muros*.

60 *Hist. Franc.* 2.14. Translation Thorpe (1974).

61 *Hist. Franc.* 2.16.

62 For the meanings of these two terms, see Herbert de la Portbarré-Viard (2013).

63 See for example in *Mart.* 1.2, the expression *atrium confessoris*, and *Mart.* 1.23.

64 On the meaning of the expression *atrium basilicae sancti Martini*, referring 'non seulement à une étendue de terrain avoisinant la basilique', but also 'à un espace matériellement délimité par une clôture', see Pietri (1983) 390 sqq.

65 See Pietri (1983) 394–405.

66 See *uit. pat.* 17 (chapter dedicated to Nicetius of Trier).

67 See for example *Mart.* 3.26, about the *basilica sancti Martini.*

68 Paul. Nol. *Carm.* 27.558–559.

69 Gauthier (2002) 35.

The Sanctuary Door and Urban Space

In the texts of the Old Testament, city gates, those of Jerusalem particularly, are very important. They ensure the inhabitants' safety,[70] and allow them to be a community. Gregory often associates Christian basilicas with towns, and sanctuary doors with city gates. I shall quote as an example *Hist. Franc.* 6.11. We are in the context of the fight of Dinamius, the governor of Provence against the bishop of Marseille, Theodorus.[71] Dinamius has agreed to stop compromising with the bishop. The latter triumphantly enters the city with Duke Gondulfus, while at the same time the city gates and sanctuary doors are opened: 'Tunc reseratis tam portarum quam sacrarum aedium ualuas, ingrediuntur utrique ciuitatem, dux scilicet et episcopus …' ('The city gates were opened once more, and the church doors too. Duke [Gundulf] and Bishop [Theodore] entered [Marseille] …).[72]

According to me, putting city gates and sanctuary doors on the same level reflects the image of the bishop as *patronus* and *defensor* of the city, kept alive by hagiography.[73] Both entrances seem to have a protective function, as a passage of the *Liber uitae Patrum* clearly shows. While an epidemic of bubonic plague was cruelly assailing the population within the walls of the city of Trier, a voice was heard in the night:[74]

> 'Et quid hic, o socii, faciemus? Ad unam enim portam Eucharius sacerdos obseruat, ad aliam Maximinus excubat, in medio uersatur Nicetius; nihil hic ultra praeualere possumus, nisi sinamus hanc urbem eorum tuitioni.' Haec uoce audita, statim morbus quieuit …
>
> 'What must we do, companions? For at one of the gates Bishop Eucherius watches, and at the other Maximin is on the alert. Nicetius is busy in the middle. There is nothing left for us to do except leave this town to their protection.' As soon as this voice had been heard, the malady ceased …

70 See the examples given in the *Vocabulaire de Théologie biblique* 1003–1004.

71 See for example Wood (1994) 84–86.

72 *Hist. Franc.* 6.11. Translation Thorpe (1974).

73 See Beaujard (2000) 449.

74 *Vit. pat.* 17.4. Translation James (1986). Compare Beaujard (2000) 449, who points out that 'dans les récits du VIe siècle, l'évêque lui-même est doué d'une espèce de force magique qui fait reculer le mal.'

Given that the church of St Eucherius[75] (the first bishop of Trier of the third century) is outside the north gate of the city (the Porta Nigra), and the church of St Maximin (a saint of great influence at the time of the Emperor Constans during the mid-fourth century) is outside the south gate, and the cathedral of Nicetius is situated between the two within the walls,[76] differences between doors of sanctuaries and city gates vanish. The bishops and the saints are in front of the doors of the city and of the sanctuaries, as the angels in front of the gates of heavenly Jerusalem.[77] This protective function of sanctuary doors can involve a form of veneration, but it does not prevent them from being desecrated.

The Door to the Sanctuary at the Merovingian Period as a Place Where Various Forms of 'Desacralisation' Can Take Place

When Sanctuary Doors are Forced

Some texts written by Gregory show that during the Merovingian period, doors of sanctuaries were often desecrated and acts of violence could happen inside.[78] So the bishop and / or the martyr often appears as the representative of heavenly justice in this troubled historical context. I will quote, for example, a scene of violence in the basilica of St Julian at Brioude in the *History of the Franks*, but there are other examples.[79] During a rebellion of the Auvergne against Theuderic (one of the sons of Clovis) in 532, the army is running through the country and devastating it, and finally reaches the entrance of the famous church:

> De quibus nonnuli ad basilicam sancti Iuliani perueniunt, confringunt ostia, seras remouent resque pauperum, quae *ibidem* fuerant adgregatae, diripiunt et multa in hoc loco perpetrant mala.
>
> Some of [Theuderic's] troops came to the church of Saint Julian: they destroyed the locks, broke open the doors, stole the possessions of the

75 Now the church of St Matthias.

76 See James (1986) 155.

77 See Rev. 21.12.

78 Profanations of Christian churches often happened in the Merovingian period, and Gregory frequently alludes to this type of incident, involving damage and plundering. The following law was issued on 25 April 398 (*C.Th.* 16.2, 25) 'qui prévoit que toute personne se ruant dans les églises catholiques et y suscitant des dommages se verrait châtiée par la peine capitale', as Ducloux (1994) 117.

79 See for example *Hist. Franc.* 6.11, on the violence in the basilica of St Stephen at Marseille in the context of the political struggle between Dinamius and Theodorus.

> poor inhabitants which had been put there for safety and did as much damage as they could.[80]

The authors of these crimes are punished by the saint who takes the place of earthly justice: they tear themselves up and bite themselves. However, it would be mistaken to look at this hagiographic punishment as separated from the violence inherent to the Merovingian period, since it in Gregory's mind it was linked to the concept of history, as we can see below through a few examples, some of which have a prominent political value.

Political Implications

In the Gregory's texts, we can also discover the political importance of entering or not entering the door to the sanctuary: another form of 'desacralisation.' In a passage of the *Libri historiarum*,[81] Merovech tries to escape from his father, the king Chilperic, who is angry about his marriage with his aunt Brunhild[82] and who thinks that because of his sinful behaviour, he is responsible for a war.[83] Merovech enters the basilica of St Martin at Tours and demands communion.[84] This is granted to him, lest he carries out his threat to kill some persons. The political background is crucial here, because Gregory narrates in the subsequent lines of the text that Chilperic threatens to destroy the whole country, if Gregory does not accept to chase Merovech out of the basilica. Gregory's refusal is based on the right to asylum:[85]

> Nobis autem missa caelebrantibus, in sanctam basilicam, aperta repperiens ostia, ingressus est. Post missa autem petiit, ut ei eulogias dare deberemus. […] Quod cum refutaremus, ipse clamare coepit et dicere, quod non recte eum a communione sine fratrum conibentia suspenderemus. […] Veritus autem sum, ne, dum unum a communione suspendebam, in multos excisterem homicida. Minibatur enim aliquos de populo nostro interficere, si communionem nostram non meruisset. Multas tamen pro hac causa Toronica regio sustenuit clades. […] Igitur Chilpericus nuntius ad nos direxit, dicens: 'Eicite apostatam illam de basilicam; sin autem

80 *Hist. Franc.* 3.12. Translation Thorpe (1974).

81 *Hist. Franc.* 5.14.

82 And this 'contrary to divine law and the canons' (see *Hist. Franc.* 5.2).

83 *Hist. Franc.* 5.3.

84 Gregory tells us that Merovech was tonsured and ordained priest and that Gunthram Boso secretly advises him to take refuge in the basilica of St Martin (*Hist. Franc.* 5.14).

85 About the right to asylum and its history, see Ducloux (1994).

> aliud, totam regionem illam igne succendam.' Cumque nos rescripsissemus inpossibile esse, quod temporibus hereticorum non fuerat, christianis nunc temporibus fieri, ipsi exercitum commouit et illuc dirigit.
>
> He [Merovech] found the door open and walked in. I was celebrating Mass at the time. When the service was over he asked me to give him some of the bread of oblation. [...] We [Gregory and Ragnemod, Bishop of Paris] refused, but Merovech made a scene and said that we had no right to suspend him from communion without the consent of our fellow bishops. [...] I was afraid that by refusing to give communion to one man I might cause the death of many, for Merovech threatened to kill some of our congregation if he were not allowed to take communion with us. The region round Tours suffered great devastation as a result of what I had done. [...] Thereupon Chilperic sent messengers to me to to say: 'Expel this apostate from your church. If you refuse, I will set your whole countryside alight.' When I wrote back that it was impossible to do in Christian times what had not been done even in the days of the heretics, he raised an army and sent it to attack Tours.[86]

In this passage, Gregory represents himself as celebrating Mass in the basilica of St Martin at Tours, inside the sacred space delimitated by the doors of the sanctuary—even if opened. His refusal to administer Communion to Merovech echoes the moral and spiritual authority of the bishops of his times. Several Merovingian councils advocate excommunication in case of incestuous union of marriage, a nephew and his aunt for example (as is the case with Merovech).[87] This text bears equally witness to the political power of the bishop, who by invoking the right to asylum does not hesitate to oppose the power of the king. Consequently, he uses what Beaujard calls 'a true counter-power'.[88] Here, the power of the bishop claims a sort of jurisdiction on the space of the basilica of St Martin at Tours materialized by the doors of the sanctuary: Merovech found them open, and they close in on him, in a certain way, to protect him.

Human and Divine Law: Fighting, Coexisting, or Interacting

In the texts of Gregory, finally, sanctuary doors also delimit a sacralized space where human and divine law fight each other, coexist with each other

86 Translation Thorpe (1974).

87 See canon 30 of the Council of Epaone (517) on the case of a marriage with an aunt.

88 See Beaujard (2000) 443–444.

or interact.[89] In a passage of the *History of the Franks*, the Arian Amalaric, Clotild's unworthy husband, has unsuccessfully tried to take refuge in a church to escape the arrival of his father-in-law Childebert.[90] Amalaric is killed before entering the basilica.

> Videns autem se non posse euadere, ad eclesiam christianorum confugere coepit. Sed priusquam limina sancta contingerit, unus emissam manum lanciam eum mortali ictu sauciauit, ibique decidens reddedit spiritum.
>
> Seeing that all escape was cut off, he ran to take refuge in one of the Christian churches. Before he could cross the threshold of the building, a soldier threw a javelin at him and wounded him mortally. He fell to the ground and died on the spot.[91]

Moreover, in a passage of the *Liber de uirtutibus sancti Iulianii*, Becco, an arrogant count, demands a large sum of money to free a young servant of the basilica of St Julian, who had been unjustly accused of having stolen a falcon. The priest (*presbyter, sacerdos*) of the basilica succeeds in collecting the ransom and withdrawing it from the treasure of the saint, but divine punishment strikes Becco without delay as soon as he enters the basilica.[92]

In the first text, the threshold of the basilica seems to be a passage into the space of divine law, which Amalaric, being an Arian, is unworthy to enter. The right to asylum is so to say materialized by the door to the Christian sanctuary, but this right is not granted to whomever demands it: the heretic Amalaric is so to speak outside the jurisdiction of the saint. In the second text, divine law fights against worldly injustice, and crossing the threshold results for arrogant Becco in bearing the jurisdiction of the saint: pronouncing the name of this iniquitous count is enough to cause his death.

89 See Beaujard (2000) 444–446 about rivalry between counts and bishops. 'Toutes ces interventions divines ont déterminé des rapports de force entre l'évêque, protecteur et protégé des saints, et le comte'.

90 Clotild frequently had to endure humiliations from her husband because of her catholic faith. This is the reason why Childebert came to Spain.

91 *Hist. Franc.* 3.10. Translation Thorpe (1974).

92 *Iul.* 16.

Conclusion

Paulinus' and Gregorius' passages on the sanctuary doors represent, according to me, two essential stages in the process of fixing the meanings of the door—which is at the same time a structural element, fundamental to the architecture of these sacred buildings, a place where symbolic meanings converge, and an essential element for the access of the faithful into the sanctuary. The symbolic meanings of the door in the texts of Paulinus are numerous and varied. In the works of Gregory, the door to the sanctuary is still a place of transition into a sacred space, but its textual representation is linked to a more material Christianity, anchored in the cult of the saints and in praise of their miracles. Paulinus writes in a period, at the early stages of Christian architecture, which is still closely linked to the Ancient World, and to the beginning of the cult of the saints. Two centuries later, in the world of Gregory, that of a mature Christianity, Christian buildings are at the same time the place of the most intense devotion and of the most violent conflicts where religion, law and politics interact. In these sanctuaries of the Merovingian times, the doors situated at the 'interface' of inside and outside play an essential part.

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PART 4

The Presence of the Divine

∵

CHAPTER 11

Filters of Light

Greek Temple Doors as Portals of Epiphany

Christina G. Williamson

Spiders are reported to have spun white webs across the door of the temple of Demeter Thesmophoria in Thebes before the battle at Leuctra in 371 BCE, and black webs appeared upon the approach of Alexander the Great (Paus. 9.6.6).[1] Rarely places of such immediate portent, this example illuminates the space of the door as one of power, a mediator between past and present, and a regulator of access and restriction. While not every place of cult included a temple, those that did generally featured some kind of monumental doorway.[2] This entrance had a purpose of its own. Temple doors did not mark the fundamental boundary between the pure and the polluted; that was at the edge of the sacred precinct, channelled via a formal gate, and is where people were allowed—or denied—passage to the shrine according to the relevant conditions.[3] Conversely, the primary point of contact with the divine was the altar where sacrifices were performed. Temples were a luxury. But they were also magnets of desire. Places of cult that included them were dominated by them as their fame spread; they even drew tourists as the writings of Pausanias and Athenaeus indicate.

Doors were among the jewels of temple architecture and would have lured the visitor inwards, past the peripteral screen of columns.[4] Studies have been dedicated to the formal aspects of temple doors, from their construction to their incorporation in the sculptural program of the temple.[5] Their openings were also a principle means of illuminating the cult image and interior space,

1 According to Ael. *VH* 12.57 the webs were spun across the face of the cult image, see below.

2 Athenaeus' story of the Tyrrhenian pirates who were easily able to steal the cult image of Hera because her temple on Samos had no doors is an exception that proves the rule, *Deipn.* 15.12.

3 'For some worshippers, the visit to a sanctuary already ended, for ethnic or gender reasons, at the entrance to the temenos', Mylonopoulos (2011) 287 n. 75; Parker (1983); Lupu (2005) 14–21. On sanctuary gates and *propylaia*, see especially Guggisberg (2013b).

4 Donaldson (1833) v.

5 Esp. Büsing-Kolbe (1978) and Büsing (1988); recently Pope and Schultz (2014).

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partly determining temple orientation.[6] Recent research into the function of temples has concentrated on the relationship between the structure and the sculpture within.[7] Clearly the contents of temples were precious and doors were a crucial means of controlling access to the interior and the sacred image of the divine. But they were more than that. In this present work I examine the role of Greek temple doors from a broad perspective in relation to the function of temples, the attraction of entrances, the connection with the cult image, and the framing of divine epiphanies. Two extreme examples where doors were especially fundamental to temple design—the Cnidian sanctuary of Aphrodite, as described in Pseudo-Lucian, and the temple of Apollo in Didyma—will serve to highlight some key concepts of doorways and their connection to the divine in the Greek world.

Temple doors may not have guarded the most critical boundary between sacred and profane, but they did filter communication between mortals and immortals. What this communication entailed, however, depends on who was allowed to pass through the doors, and what went on inside.

Temples Inside Out

Temples were objects of prestige and their presence distinguished a sanctuary and increased its likelihood to be recalled in literary sources, creating a textual bias towards monumentalized sanctuaries that persists to the present day. The rise of Greek temple building in the Archaic period may be linked to a growing aristocracy but also a collective identity as community funds were channelled to these public monuments. Temples were anchors connecting the gods to a particular place through their cult and now non-portable cult images.[8] Their development is often associated with inter-state rivalry, aggression, and territorial claims, particularly with sanctuaries located at contested borders.[9]

6 Dinsmoor (1939) on astronomical orientation; more recently Boutsikas (2009). See also Beyer (1990) on temple orientation and aperture in connection with the illumination of the cult image, following the method proposed by Durm (1881) 58–60. I further pursued this idea in connection with developments in interior space and the increasing trend towards naturalism in cult imagery in the fourth century BCE, Williamson (1993).

7 Von Hesberg (2015), with references, who applies an integral approach to the experience of the cult image in the temple; also Mylonopoulos (2015).

8 Gladigow (1990) 104.

9 Esp. de Polignac (1995); also the contributions in Alcock and Osborne (1994) and Gladigow (1990).

The striking appearance of peripteral temples, along with the rediscovery of Vitruvius, led to a myopic focus among scholars on their exterior orders and design. At the same time temple interiors—in contrast with churches—were assumed to have largely been the reserve of priests, despite the apparent increase in the refinement of interior space and emphasis on the entrance in post-classical temples.[10] Sculpted mouldings, widened naves with columns pushed further back to (and into) the walls created more central space before the cult image.[11] Ritual, however, is being seen more and more as a determining factor in the design of temple interiors.[12] A ground-breaking example is P.E. Corbett's brief but vigorous study on temple access, which demonstrates ancient attitudes on the effectiveness of prayer before the cult image as a normal means of communication with the divine, and implying frequent encounters.[13] Georges Roux distinguished temples that were essentially ritual in focus, the *temple-sanctuaire*, from those that were largely intended to store and protect the wealth of the sanctuary (or polis), the *temple-trésor*.[14] The Erechtheion with its design dictated by cult and performance and the Parthenon with its *opisthodomos* that operated as state treasury serve as prime examples of each type.[15] Both the *opisthodomos* and the *pronaos* of the Parthenon had fixtures for the instalment of grilles, a feature they shared with several other temples.[16] Mary Hollinshead addressed these distinctions in her discussion of the so-called *adyton*, the innermost room that

10 Hewitt (1909) argued for restricted access. The focus on interior and entrance, starting in the fourth century BCE, was dismissed by Dinsmoor as a mere 'increase in ornament, at the expense of strength and dignity' in his section entitled 'The beginning of the decadence', Dinsmoor (1973 [1950]) 217.

11 Starting with Bassae and Tegea. Corbett (1970); Knell (1983) and Knell (2007); Williamson (1993).

12 Esp. Corbett (1970). Lupu (2005) 14–21 gives a good overview. See further Hollinshead (1999); Mylonopoulos (2011); Gawlinski (2014); von Hesberg (2015); Sporn (2015), among others. A recent overview of temple interiors is given by Miles (2016).

13 Corbett (1970) 151 cites examples such as in Euripides *Andr.* 1117 where Neoptolemus prays to Apollo through his statue, or in Herodotus 1.31.4, where the mother of Cleobis and Biton prays before the image of Hera for her sons, or 6.61 where Ariston's third wife, who as a baby was ugly, was such a beauty because her nurse took her to the shrine of Helen every day and set her beside the cult image, praying to for her beauty.

14 Roux (1984) 171: '... les uns sont construits pour la célébration du culte, les autres pour abriter des offrandes et des statues.'

15 Roux (1984) 162–163; also Hollinshead (2015) on the rituals of the Erechtheion.

16 Stephens (1942) and Stephens (1950); also discussed in Corbett (1970); Pope and Schultz (2014); Gawlinski (2014).

several temples possessed, particularly in Sicily.[17] Long considered the 'inner sanctum', the term ἄδυτον is in fact seldom found in literary sources in connection with temples but is applied to a wide variety of spaces, sacred and profane—it simply designates an area where one does not tread, for whatever reason, as Hollinshead demonstrates. An *adyton* does not necessarily refer to the climax of a sanctified hierarchy of space, although these inner rooms may very well have been used for the safekeeping of precious votives.

Votive storage and display were clearly important functions of temples.[18] Much of Pausanias' descriptions revolve around the splendour to be seen inside various temples, something that temple inventories confirm. Josephine Shaya used the fantastic inventory of the temple of Athena Lindia on Rhodes as a fulcrum for considering the role of temples as museums, connecting past and present through their objects, but specifically as a way of building community identity.[19] Herodas' fourth mime, depicting the two women from Cos entering the temple of Asclepius and their marvel at the sculpture and paintings, would support this museal approach.[20] Verity Platt, however, argues that temples were first and foremost religious rather than social or cultural spaces, places of encounter with the gods that were dictated by rules of cult, albeit in negotiation with aesthetic principles.[21] What both views have in common is the importance of context of the objects on display within the temple interiors, whether this was driven by cult, or by political or social dynamics.

The main attraction of a temple was of course its cult image. Detailed discussions of what they looked like and who made them occupy an important part in Pausanias' descriptions of venerable sanctuaries. His diligence in explaining the instances when he was not able to view the cult image indicates that this was much more the exception than the rule, and that regular visitors could typically enter temples at will, albeit under certain conditions such as festival days.[22] Numerous temples were outfitted with barriers in front of the cult image and Ioannis Mylonopoulos sees this as an indication of public traffic

17 Hollinshead (1999); also discussed in Csepregi (chapter 4) in this volume.

18 Van Straten (1981) 78 paints a vivid picture of the interiors of Greek temples crowded with votives and decorations; also Aleshire (1991).

19 Shaya (2005); also Miles (2008); Connelly (2011) 316.

20 Herodas' fourth mime. Corbett (1970) 150 notes how easily they gain entrance to the temple.

21 Platt (2010).

22 Pausanias' specific examples of temple closures have long been generalized by scholars, such as Hewitt (1909), as the norm rather than the exception, see Corbett (1970) 150–151.

and consequently frequent opening of these temples.[23] Such barriers provide another filter beyond the temple doors and would have played an important role in creating spatial hierarchies while regulating movement in the interior.

The kinetic experience of temples is further implied by interior staircases that led to the attic or roof, most common in Sicilian temples of the archaic period, where they are bilaterally located inside the entrance. Because of their narrow dimensions, Margaret Miles has suggested a unidirectional flow, one stairwell to ascend and the other to descend.[24] Surviving fragments show heavy wear, and Miles argues that while they may be related to maintenance or storage, these staircases more likely facilitated public rituals that took place in the attic, the area of the temple closest to the heavens.[25] Such temples afforded yet another dimension of movement to their doorways, that of going up, besides going in or out.

Besides cult images, and dedications, another focus for ritual inside the *cella* was sacrifice. In the *Iliad* 6.293–310, Theano, priestess of Athena in Troy, addresses the goddess as she prepares to offer twelve heifers in her temple. Although indoor sacrifices are rarely discussed, they were perhaps more frequent than they seem. Katja Sporn recently assessed temples with access ramps and Corbett lists several instances that indicate interior sacrifice as a fairly common practice.[26] Famous examples include the Erechtheion, with an altar for Poseidon and Erechtheus, as well as Boutes and Hephaistus, and the temple of Apollo at Delphi, where clients sacrificed prior to consulting the oracle (Paus. 1.6.25).[27] In his itinerary of ritual at Olympia, Pausanias relates that after sacrificing to Hestia one proceeds 'to the altar within the temple' of Olympic Zeus (Paus. 5.14.4). In later Roman times a coin issue at Neocaesarea in Pontus shows a lit altar within a temple.[28] Some indoor sacrifices were

23 Mylonopoulos (2011) 285–288. Inversely, temples lacking such barriers would, in his view, have been much more restricted.

24 Miles (1998–199) 14–15, especially regarding the spiral staircase of the 'Concordia' temple at Akragas.

25 Miles (1998–199) 22, pointing out that the depiction of the divine in the sculpture of the pediment, metopes, and acroteria indicate the roof as 'border zone' of contact with the gods.

26 Sporn (2015); Corbett (1970) 150.

27 Also Plut. *De Def. Or.* 348 and Dio Chrys. *Or.* 53.556.

28 With Julia Domna on the obverse, e.g. *SNG* UK Vol. 12 Part 1, no. 1155 in the Hunterian Museum in Glasgow.

spectacular,[29] but most were probably more private affairs consisting of incense and cakes along with prayers.

In sum, the purpose of temples was two-fold: on the one hand they housed the cult image, but on the other they facilitated ritual acts that bound worshipper and deity together, such as prayer and sacrifice, the giving of gifts to the god and the viewing of the gods' wealth. Clearly the doors of the temple helped protect the precious contents inside, the most valued possessions of the sanctuary and often of the polis. But temples were secured only by their locks and grilles; they were not in the first place vaults or strongholds.[30] Instead they were highly articulated spaces that filtered and regulated individual interaction with the divine. Their entrances played a fundamental role in this perspective.

The Lure of the Entrance

Heiner Knell observed that 'je deutlicher das Innenraum als Ziel der Architektur erscheint, des te deutlicher wird die Eingangssituation hervorgehoben.'[31] Doric temples of classical Greece are generally perceived to have an even balance between their *pronaos* and *opisthodomos*, often emphasized through symmetrical sculpture in the architraves at either end, thereby downplaying the role of the entrance.[32] The temple of Zeus at Olympia, with its metopes around both the east and west ends, is a classic example.[33] However, this temple is also one of several in the archaic and early classical period that were equipped with ramps to facilitate ritual access to the entry, possibly a sign of sacrifice in the *cella*.[34] With regard to the archaic temples of Sicily and the late-classical

29 E.g. the temple of Demeter on Pron where the priestesses slaughtered four cows inside, one by one after ritualized process of selection (Paus. 2.35.6); Corbett (1970) 150.

30 Gawlinski (2014), who points out that the safekeeping of the gods' treasures was entrusted to the gods themselves, at least in part. General respect was also a factor and according to Artemidorus, *Oneir.* 33, even dreams of pillaged temples were inauspicious as they could portend a great crisis that would lead to abandoning the gods.

31 Knell (1983) 229.

32 Fore and aft symmetry typifies the 'Allseitigkeit' of the Doric canon, whereas Ionic (but also Sicilian Doric) temples tend to exhibit a stronger frontality; the Corinthian order is principally seen as an interior refinement, e.g. Pollitt (1986) 247–249; Onians (1988) 8–40.

33 Paus. 5.10.9 gives a detailed description of the metopes of the temple of Zeus.

34 Sporn (2015). Once thought to be a much later phenomenon, Sporn's study demonstrates the presence of ramps at archaic and early classical temples, among which are Kalapodi, Trapeza Aigiou, Aegina, Argos, and Olympia, as well as later temples at especially Delphi, Epidaurus, Messene, Tegea and Nemea.



FIGURE 11.1 *North door of the Erechtheion in Athens.*
PHOTO: CHR. WILLIAMSON 2016, WITH PERMISSION OF THE ATHENS EPHORATE OF ANTIQUITIES.

temples in Ionia, Miles notes the priority given to the area of the *pronaos* through additional depth and the restriction of sculpture to these areas.[35] Even the later Ionic temples that include an *opisthodomos* are nonetheless frontal, such as the temple of Artemis in Sardis, with six columns marching into the *pronaos* towards the elevated *cella*, or the temple of Zeus at Aizanoi with an extra row of columns before the *pronaos*, or the temples of Zeus Sosipolis and Artemis Leukophryene in Magnesia on the Maeander, each with a spacious *pronaos* that was just as deep as the *cella* itself.[36] Such halls would have visually funnelled attention towards the door. The entrance of Ionic temples was further enhanced by the sculpture of their door-frames, such embellishments being exclusive to sacred architecture (fig. 11.1).[37] These monumental frames clearly marked the transition from outside to inside as they appear only on

35 Miles (1998–1999) 24.

36 Sardis: Cahill and Greenewalt (2016) 496, fig. 24; Aizanoi: Krencker and Schede, et al. (1979) and Posamentir and Wörrle (2006); Magnesia: Humann and Kohte, et al. (1904).

37 At least in the Archaic period, Büsing-Kolbe (1978) 82.

the exterior, in Ionic and Doric temples, where they also would have received the most light.[38] Their ornamentation gave a directional flow to the design of the temple—they were primarily meant to impress the visitor in the *pronaos*, drawing their attention inwards towards the *cella*. These elaborate doorways marked the last stage in a series of transitions en route to the cult image. Their extravagance signifies a strong visual function that gave meaning to passage, often accompanied by a rise in floor level, while framing the view towards the cult image within.[39]

In addition, the even shade of the *pronaos* would have created a transitional zone between the open sunlight of the sanctuary, the striated light of the peristyle,[40] and the inner recesses of the *cella*, principally illumined via the doorway.[41] Their soft lighting, coolness, proximity to the *cella*, yet with a view towards the sanctuary and altar, must have made the *pronaos* a natural and comfortable place to linger, whether during a formal ritual, while waiting to enter the *cella*, or simply as a place to meet during a festival. Places of entry are as a rule highly public areas because of the flow of traffic and because they give the greatest overview of space in multiple directions, affording several options for action and information. Recent studies show that these are where people are most likely to congregate.[42] This is also suggested by the locations of inscriptions in the walls of temples, often concentrating in or around the *pronaos* and on the *antae* of the *cella*, as well as the placement of statues near the entrance.[43] The *pronaos* of the temple of Despoina at Lykosoura was clearly an honorific space in later Hellenistic and imperial contexts.[44] At the shrine of the Karian deity Sinuri, near Mylasa, several honorific decrees explicitly state that they are to be inscribed left of the door, upon entering, or right of the door, upon leaving.[45] Most of the royal correspondence on the temple and *androns* at Labraunda were discovered on or near *antae*.[46] In Arkesine, decisions

38 This is evidenced by the rectilinear depressions cut into the stone to hold the frames; Büsing-Kolbe (1978) 127; Büsing (1988) 109.

39 Discussed further below.

40 Gruben (1986 [1966]) 43, with references. It should be noted that peristyles were less common in the post-classical period.

41 On the illumination of the *cella*, see Williamson (1993); for artificial illumination: Wölfel (1990); Patera (2010); Miles (2016) 206–208.

42 Benedikt (1979) initiated the study of 'isovist' fields and their impact on human spatial behavior; for practical applications, see Batty (2001).

43 Discussed further by Roels (chapter 8 in this volume); also von Hesberg (2009).

44 Kantirea (2016) esp. 37–38.

45 E.g. *Sinuri* 31, line 1 and *Sinuri* 46B, line 10; discussed in Williamson (2012) 158–159.

46 *ILabraunda* 1–12.

regarding the hostel arrangements in the sanctuary of Hera were to be inscribed before the doors of the temple.[47]

The alignment of temples in their spatial contexts determines the extent of the view from the *pronaos* over the sanctuary. But this may not have been the foremost concern as temple orientation is considered a result of symbolic and ritual intent, e.g., alignment with astronomical phenomena. William B. Dinsmoor, for example, argued that the Parthenon was oriented so as to let the first rays of light penetrate the *cella*, and the cult image, on the birthday of Athena.[48] Greek mainland temples often face east, yet the orientation of temples in other areas follows a wider variety of alignments. Temples in the Cyclades and Asia Minor show less of a pattern and point to numerous spots on the compass rose—their orientations will have been determined by local ritual requirements or the lay of the land. Some appear to establish axial relationships with local landscape features, such as mountain peaks.[49] In any event, the principle axial alignment was usually with the main altar, creating a tension between the locus of sacrifice and the image of the deity for whom it was performed, and who was presumed to witness the rituals. This tension was mediated by the door of the temple.

Doorways and Epiphanies

Although few actual doors have survived,[50] we can get a general idea of their appearance through vase painting and reliefs, which typically show them as panelled or as wooden slats tightly bolted together within a frame.[51] A good example is the fragment from a fourth century BCE calyx-krater from Taranto that shows Apollo playing a lyre outside his temple, with his cult image appearing

47 *LSCG* 194–195, no. 101, lines 7–9.

48 Presumably on the twenty-eighth day of the Hekatombaion. See Dinsmoor (1939), recently qualified by Boutsikas (2009).

49 Major temples at Sardis, Lagina, Aphrodisias directly face prominent mountains. The temple of Meter Theon at Mamurt Kale in Mysia has an axial alignment with Pergamum and beyond to a second shrine of Meter at Kapıkaya, discussed in Wulf (1999) with references; I argue that it also faces Sardis in the opposite direction, Williamson (2014).

50 Gerding (2014) gives a discussion of stone doors in sepulchral contexts. One example of a Macedonian style door, including its lock, was recently found in a tumulus on the Ilyas Tepe near Pergamum, Pirson and Japp, et al. (2011).

51 E.g. the Campanian amphora in the J. Paul Getty Museum 92.AE.86. For a general discussion on ancient doors with more examples, Walsh (1983).

in the doorway.[52] Temple doors, however, could also be elaborate works of art in themselves, sometimes used to tell stories of their own. Virgil describes how Daedalus flew from Crete to Cumae, where he sculpted his auto-biography in scenes on the enormous bronze doors that he made for the temple of Apollo (*Aeneid* 6.20–30).[53]

Several building inscriptions mention the dedication and expenses of doors in sanctuaries and temples, indicating the labour invested in them as part of the overall design.[54] Some temple doors even had panels of gold and ivory, such as at the Asclepius temple at Epidaurus.[55] Gold and ivory may well have been added to the cedar doors of the Parthenon, as Spencer Pope and Peter Schulz have recently argued.[56] This would be in keeping with a long tradition of chryselephantine doors, not just in the Greek world as at Syracuse, but also among the Egyptians, Assyrians, Hittite, and Babylonians.[57] Pope and Schulz stress the tight bond between such doors of the temple and the cult image inside—when the doors are open they frame the view of the cult image, but even when they are closed they serve as a kind of reflection, made out of the same costly materials as the statue and reverberating with imagery. They observe how these magnificent doors 'allowed the image of Athena Parthenos to be both symbolically visible and physically inaccessible, her power and image both projected and screened by the dazzling materials that allowed her divine presence to manifest.'[58] Such doors were conceptually part of the cult image and showed a unity of design, drawing the splendour of the deity out of the *cella* and into the *pronaos*, a sign of what comes next.

An example of the reception of this is found with Cicero, who deplores the actions of Verres, praetor of Sicily, among others for robbing the gold and ivory

52 Allard Pierson Museum: APM02579, also discussed by van Opstall (chapter 1 of this volume). See for an image Lapatin (2010) 134, fig. 7.2, or the Allard Pierson website: hdl.handle.net/11245/3.2666 (accessed 29.11.2017).

53 This passage depicts scenes of the labyrinth in Crete, Pasiphae and the bull, the Minotaur, but also the fate of Icarus; Casali (1995/6); the elaborate doors of Juno's temple, as described in Virgil, *Aeneid* 1.453–493 are discussed in van Opstall (chapter 1 of this volume).

54 E.g. at Delphi: *FD* III 1.3924b and 5.25; *BCH* 23 (1899) 526; *BCH* 115 (1991) 169; at Delos in the long votive inventory: *IG* XI,2 287; at Epidaurus: *IG* IV^2,1 102; *IG* IV^2,1 110.

55 Pope and Schultz (2014), according to the building inscriptions.

56 Pope and Schultz (2014), based on the chronology of inscriptions on the sale of excess ivory and parallels with other temples with chryselephantine doors; Oliver (1992). The Asclepius temple in Epidaurus also had gold and ivory doors, as the building inscriptions demonstrate; Pope and Schultz (2014).

57 Pope and Schultz (2014) 22–25.

58 Pope and Schultz (2014) 28.

workmanship from the doors of the temple of Athena.[59] He relates the great fame of these doors among the Greeks, who 'perhaps, may admire and extol them too much', yet Verres left the wooden leaves of the door in such a sad state that 'though they had formerly contributed greatly to the ornament of the temple, they now seemed to have been made only for the purpose of shutting it up'.[60]

Securing the contents within was certainly an important function of temple doors, yet it was clearly not their sole purpose. Temple doors could be exquisite works of art, made of costly materials that reflected the pride of their community, while offering pictorial space to transport the viewer into a different world.

The 'Doorway Effect'

Liminal zones in the ancient world clearly belonged to the realm of the divine and were even the domain of certain deities such as Hecate, goddess of crossroads (Trivia in Latin), or Hermes, who watched over boundaries in general, or the gatekeeper Janus in the Roman world.[61] Thresholds in sanctuaries were furthermore signifying elements in a hierarchy of space. Typically perched on the axis between cult image and altar, these spaces of transition would have been closely connected with the gods of the temple. Even one of the most practical security features of a door—the lock—took on a symbolic value when it was associated with the role of the priest or priestess as the *kleidouchos*,[62] keeper of the key, or as at Lagina the *kleidophoros*, the maiden who carried Hecate's sacred key in the sacred procession of the *kleidos agoge* from her shrine in Lagina to the civic centre of Stratonikeia.[63]

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59 This temple was built in 480 BCE by Gelon to commemorate his victory over the Carthaginians at Himera; discussed in Pope and Schultz (2014) 23–24 with references.

60 Cic. *Verr.* 4.2.124 (translation C.D. Yonge, 1903); Casali (1995/6).

61 E.g. Alkamenes' tripartite image of Hecate 'Epipyrgidia' (on the tower) near the temple of Athena Nike, Paus. 2.30.2. A dedication to Hecate as 'Phosphoros' concerning the city gates was found at Milete, *Milet* I 3, 172; Johnston (1999) 206–209 discusses her role as guardian of entrances along with Hermes. Alkamenes also created the Hermes Propylaea in Athens, a copy of which was discovered in Pergamum (Istanbul, Archaeological Museum, 527). The funerary stele of Hiras from Erythrai (now in Munich, Pfuhl and Möbius (1977), No. 137) is a good depiction of a herm at the doorway of the tomb. In the Roman world, Janus guarded doorways and crossroads.

62 As with Theano in the *Iliad* 6.297.

63 Discussed further in Williamson (2013), with references. Also Walsh (1983); Connelly (2007) 92–104.

The door to the temple marked the moment of transgression from outer to inner space and was a sacred zone, a formalized point of contact between human and divine worlds.[64] The opening of the temple door was in itself often a ritualized act.[65] Such charged points of passage were clearly symbolic, with the spatial context heightening the awareness of this point of transition. Henri Lefebvre describes it thus:

> Its surround make a door into an object. In conjunction with their frames, doors attain the status of works, works of a kind not far removed from pictures and mirrors. Transitional, symbolic and functional, the object 'door' serves to bring a space … to an end; and it heralds the reception to be expected in the neighbouring room, or in the house or interior that awaits.[66]

Lefebvre's view coincides well with recent research from the University of Notre Dame, in which a team of psychologists analysed the 'doorway effect'—the phenomenon of going into another room and immediately forgetting what it was that one was after the moment one walks through the door.[67] Their findings show doorways to be 'event boundaries' in what Gabriel Radvansky designates as the 'event horizon model' of cognition and memory.[68] This model describes cognition and memory as the parsing of past actions into separate events that are spatially contextualized. Entering a new space therefore triggers an update of one's 'event model', releasing some memory space in order to process the new event. In other words, walking through a door not only creates a new range of possibilities, it literally shifts the way one thinks and remembers (or forgets). The study shows in short the tight connection between spatial structures and cognition. The phenomenon becomes even more charged when

64 With regard to votive reliefs, Klöckner (2010) 109 observes formal entry on a Hellenistic relief for Cybele and Attis (Venice AM 118), where worshippers first pass through the temple door instead of approaching the god directly, as on a relief from the Asclepieion in Athens (Athens NM 1332).

65 E.g. Pergamum, where all the temples were opened in 129 BCE to celebrate Roman rule, *LSAM* 15, lines 41–44; at Teos the temple of Dionysus was opened daily with hymns, and closed with libations, incense and lamp-lighting, *LSAM* 28, lines 7–14 (imperial); similar activities were prescribed at Epidaurus, *IG* IV^2 1, 742 and *LSS* 25 (imperial).

66 Lefebvre 2007 (1991) 209–210.

67 Radvansky and Krawietz, et al. (2011) 1643.

68 Radvansky (2012).

the senses are affected, as with incense or perfume,[69] or the acute change in light, as described above. The rapid succession from the sunlit sanctuary via shaded *pronaos* to the half-light of the *cella* may not have triggered a circadian rhythm response,[70] but surely would have increased the impact of the doorway as an 'event boundary', affecting vision while changing mind-set and raising awareness. This in itself would already help prepare one for a new experience and an altered way of perceiving.

Activating the Image

'Guided perception' is the term used by Burkhard Gladigow to describe how viewers were ritually but also physically prepared to experience the divine via the cult image.[71] Their life-like form was a driving factor in the switch from the portable images of the Bronze Age, linked to ambulatory rituals, to large non-portable representations of gods housed in temples.[72] Gladigow attributes this to the need of developing poleis to have a deity residing in the city's territory with a permanent epiphany on location that would serve as a shared focus for the community.[73] The dimly lit *cella* would have enhanced the effect, especially with images that were larger-than-life and those of glittering gold and ivory.[74] Scholars have recently argued that the use of costly materials in cult images was not only to display the wealth of the polis, but also to recreate as best as possible the brilliance of the god, emphasizing his or her iconic qualities as well as super-human body.[75]

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69 'There falls upon you also a divine fragrance … and it will ever remain in your memory' upon entering the temple of Assyrian Hera, in Luc. *Syr. D.* 30 (translation H.A. Strong and J. Garstang, 1913).

70 Changes in light can affect the body's circadian rhythm, influencing mood and consciousness.

71 Gladigow (1990) 103.

72 Gladigow (1990) 104. Also Romano (1988) and Gordon (1979) 22 on the prestige of cult images within temple networks.

73 Gladigow (1990) 106: 'Der Zugang zum Kultbild ist nunmehr, bis hin zu den Modalitäten der Annäherung und zum Blickwinkel des Kultteilnehmers, steuerbar und kontrollierbar … Die Heilsmöglichkeiten des einzelnen … unterliegen auf dem Wege über das ortsfeste Kultbild der jeweiligen Territorialherrschaft, zu der das Tempelgelande gehört. Das im Innern des Tempels aufgestellte, dem freien Blick und freien Zugang entzogene Kultbild steht auch in der Konsequenz eines ausgestalteten Begriffs von Grundeigentum.'

74 Mylonopoulos (2016) 121–122 on colossal statues; Lapatin (2010) 142; Steiner (2001) 100–102 on the impact of the chryselephantine image of Athena in the Parthenon.

75 Steiner (2001) 90–91 discusses how even aniconic images were later given a face, hands and feet. Also Mylonopoulos (2015), who suggests that the visual exaggeration of images

Cult images, though acknowledged as man-made, were nonetheless assumed to possess the *enargeia* of the divine, which could manifest itself at any given moment.[76] They were powerful objects and were often perceived as mobile or even volatile, despite their apparent rigidity. According to Lucian, statues could sweat, and shouting could often be heard in the temple of Assyrian Hera after the doors were locked (Luc. *Syr. D.* 10). The penetrating gaze of the statue was that of the goddess herself, simultaneously following everyone in her temple (Luc. *Syr. D.* 32).[77] Such odd behaviour surely underscored the exotic nature of this eastern divinity, yet was not entirely unknown in the Greek world. Cult images were occasionally chained down, as Athenaeus reports of the statue of Hera at Samos, after it was believed to have run off of its own accord, rather than being stolen (Ath. 15.12), or the statue of Aphrodite Morpho of Sparta, which was both fettered and veiled for reasons unclear (Paus. 3.15.10–11).[78] They could even be charged with murder, as was the statue of Theagenes of Thasos (Paus. 6.11.6–8),[79] or themselves strangled, like the statue of Artemis of Kondylia, near Kaphyai (Paus. 8.23.6–7).[80] The image of Artemis at Chios, set high, appeared sad as one entered her temple, but glad as one departed (Plin. *HN* 36. 13).[81] Statues had the potential to be as lively, emotional, and unpredictable as the gods themselves.

These are extreme examples, yet the visual exchange with the worshipper would have been one of their prime functions, whether the images assumed a frontal hieratic stance or a more naturalistic pose.[82] This depended to a great

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from the sixth and fifth centuries may have led to the more naturalistic simplicity of those in the fourth century.

76 E.g. Gordon (1979); Gladigow (1990); Burkert (1997); Scheer (2000); Elsner (2000); Steiner (2001); Klöckner (2010); Weddle (2010); Platt (2011); Guggisberg (2013a); Mylonopoulos (2015), among many others.

77 Discussed in Elsner (2000) 59–60 in the context of the 'ritual gaze'.

78 Steiner (2001) 156–168 further discusses moving cult images and their contexts, also Johnston (2008). But see Klöckner (2010) 108–109, who distinguishes between votive reliefs showing a somewhat rigid cult image within a temple from those who are in the same pictorial space as the much more natural deity.

79 The charge was made after the statue fell on a rival athlete who had been whipping it. The statue was sentenced to 'death' and thrown in the sea, but was restored according to instructions from the oracle, after calamity had befallen Thasos.

80 Called the Strangled Lady (Ἀπαγχομένην) in accordance with the oracle, after some children playing in the shrine had put a rope around the neck of the cult image (and were consequently stoned to death by the Kaphyans).

81 Gordon (1979) 9.

82 Platt 2011, 78 'to view a cult image was to encounter a being who looked back'. Also Steiner (2001) 172–184. Visual encounters with gods through their cult images is addressed in

extent on the active participation of the supplicant, who had been prepared by the sacred journey, final approach, and ritual actions for the manifestation of the divine. The gods were powerful, erratic, and not necessarily benevolent to humans—they had to be won over with prayer. Deborah Steiner argues that the chains and veils may well have served to constrain the harmful effect of their powers, including their gaze, as their cult images were activated.[83] If so, then doors would have constituted yet another filter in their protective capacity, but in this case to shield the public outside.

Framing Epiphanies

Through their capacity to conceal, reveal, and frame the image within, doorways facilitated the epiphanic experience awaiting the visitor the moment the cult image came into view. Coins, particularly from Asia Minor, that show the cult image in the temple appear to depict this moment of revelation to the worshipper (fig. 11.2).[84] Such doorway epiphanies would have been cultivated as part of the ritual progression within sanctuaries,[85] and on occasion could even be staged. At Sikyon, for example, worshippers were only given the framed view of Aphrodite's chryselephantine cult image from the door since they were forbidden to enter the *cella* and had to pray to the goddess at the entry (Paus. 2.10.4). Woollen curtains acted as another, more dramatic filter for the cult image, as in the temple of Artemis at Ephesus, where they could be drawn upwards to reveal the interior, or at Olympia, where Antiochus (Epiphanes?) dedicated an Assyrian curtain that could be dropped to the floor in the temple of Zeus (Paus. 5.12.4).[86] 'Curtains and lighting effects' were further identified by Richard Gordon as ways that new cults could enhance their images, particularly in later eras.[87] Illumination certainly figured in the appreciation of Damophon's images of Despoina and Demeter in their temple at Lykosoura.

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detail by Gordon (1979) 8–10, and Elsner (2000) esp. p. 60 on the frontal 'ritual' gaze of archaic images, that 'eyeball you into submission' versus the 'natural' gaze of later images, who seem to be in their own world; also Mylonopoulos (2015). Visual interaction, of course, would have accompanied more central ritual actions involving the cult image, e.g. clothing, feeding, bathing, Romano (1988).

83 Steiner (2001) 177–180.

84 These would certainly coincide with the surge of epiphanies in the later Hellenistic period, as argued in Stevenson (2001) 52–53.

85 Elsner (2000) 53–58; Petsalis-Diomidis (2010) 227.

86 Discussed in Mylonopoulos (2011) 284.

87 Gordon (1979) 22 and 33 n.68 on the 'superstitious man' in Theophrastus, *Char.* 28. See also Apuleius' *Met.* 11.20 at the temple of Isis, where the curtains are drawn to reveal the vision of the goddess and Hero's automated doors (see van Opstall in this volume, p. 11).



FIGURE 11.2 *Reverse of a Hadrianic silver tetradrachm showing the temple of Artemis in Ephesus, with the cult image visible in the temple and the door-like aperture in the pediment,* SNG UK *Vol. VI .2 1310.*
PHOTO: © THE FITZWILLIAM MUSEUM, CAMBRIDGE.

Besides the fineness of the sculpture, Pausanias mentions that a mirror was hung just right of the door as one exited—looking in it your own image would be dim but you would see the cult images very clearly (Paus. 8.37.7).[88] Their wondrous luminosity was surely due to the reflection of light through the side door in the south flank of the *cella* that opened onto the theatron. While this

88 Discussed in Steiner (2001) 177 and 183–184. For the epiphanic nature of the Lykosoura group, Platt (2011) 125–134.

door must have had a ritual function, it also would have illuminated the sculpture for most of the day. Pausanias' report may well indicate that it was kept open as a rule; in any event the placement of the mirror demonstrates a conscious exploitation, if not direct manipulation, of the effect. The mirror literally reverses the projected view from the door of the temple, allowing viewers to see themselves, as silhouettes, in the presence of the luminous gods and creating a memorable last view of the deities.

Epiphanies, or at least their re-enactments, have been offered as an explanation for the doors or door-like apertures in their frontal pediments found in a number of temples in Asia Minor.[89] A prominent example is the younger temple of Artemis in, where the openings in the pediment are shown on a number of coins, such as that shown in figure 11.2. One such coin from the Antonine period shows a figure in the central opening, largely interpreted as an epiphanic appearance, perhaps by the priestess.[90] In his reconstruction of the Hellenistic temple, Anton Bammer followed this interpretation as he showed that, while the altar would have blocked any sightline with the cult image via the main door during sacrifice, there would have been a direct view from the altar to the aperture in the pediment.[91] These 'upper doorways' may then have acted as a podium for ritual performances at moments when the regular door was difficult to see, or so that the cult image could witness the sacrifice. Julius Kohte had already suggested in 1904 a ritual function for the pediment openings in the temple of Artemis Leukophryene at Magnesia on the Maeander.[92] Orhan Bingöl further suggests that the apertures could have allowed moonlight into the *cella* and onto the cult image, giving it a visionary appearance through the main door.[93]

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89 E.g. the temples for Artemis at Ephesus and Magnesia on the Maeander, Zeus at Aizanoi, and Hecate at Lagina. See further Hommel (1957), Held (2005). But see also Magna Graecia, e.g. Marconi (2007) 189–195, and Miles (1998–1999) 21–22, who discusses this in connection with the framed aperture in the inner gable above the *cella* of the 'Temple of Concordia' at Akragas. The apertures have also been argued, although less compellingly, as a means of reducing the weight of the entablature, Dinsmoor (1973 [1950]) 225.

90 Price and Trell (1977) fig. 229, from Berlin. See Trell (1964) 251–152, 346 and Price and Trell (1977) 130–131, who draw parallels with Mesopotamia, Egypt, Late Antiquity (in depictions of early Christian churches) and even the appearance of the pope above the entrance of the Vatican. Also Oster (1982) 217 and Stevenson (2001) 53.

91 Bammer (1972) 10, fig. 6 and 41, fig. 43.

92 Humann and Kohte, et al. (1904) 64 n. 1. Also Connelly (2007) 105ff. The epiphany of Artemis in Magnesia is mentioned in *IMagn* 16 + 295 and 17, l.29.

93 Bingöl (2007) 69–73.

Besides their practical function of allowing or prohibiting access, temple doors in several cases were used to reference the cult image within, whether by elaborate frames, imagery, or costly materials. Temple doors functioned as gateways to epiphanies via the cult image of the deity within, mediating the exchange between human and divine. The shape of this exchange was articulated differently in each temple; in the next section two exceptional examples are discussed in which deities, their *enargeia*, and the doors of their temple are especially interwoven.

Clarity and Obscurity—Two Case Studies

While the several examples mentioned until now clearly indicate the pivotal function of doors in the intimate bond between worshipper, cult image and deity, there are two temples that especially stand out in which doors played a fundamental role in the conception of their architecture: the temple of Aphrodite Euploia at Cnidus, and the temple of Apollo at Didyma. Although extreme, both cases encapsulate fundamental concepts of doorways as filters of access and light, and as portals of divine presence.

One of the most vivid records of the impression a cult image could make on a human concerns Praxiteles' famous statue of Aphrodite Euploia at Cnidus, the first sculpture of a Greek goddess in the nude.[94] The loveliness and verisimilitude of the craftsmanship apparently amazed even the goddess herself, who in some epigrams wonders when Praxiteles saw her naked.[95] Such stories are typically used to illustrate the very fluid boundaries between image and deity, the magic arts of the sculptor, the sensuality of the statue, and the active participation on the part of the supplicant (or tourist). But they also show the importance of temples as creating the necessary spatial contexts for receiving epiphanies. In *Anthologia Planudea* 160, Aphrodite 'viewed it from all sides in a place apt to the purpose'.[96] Her image was so provocative that, according to Pseudo-Lucian (*Erotes* 12–16), one youth even tried to make love to the statue; afterwards he threw himself into the sea. The narrator of the story observed

> The temple had a door on both sides for the benefit of those also who wish to have a good view of the goddess from behind, so that no part of

94 Esp. Havelock (1995); Corso (2007); and Platt (2011) 183–211, all with references.

95 E.g. *Anth. Plan.* 160, 162, and 168. Also referenced in 159 and 161.

96 *Anth. Plan.* 160 (attributed to Plato or his circle): πάντη δ᾽ἀθρήσασα περισκέπτῳ ἐνὶ χώρῳ (translation W.K. Paton, *Loeb Classical Library* 86, 1918).

> her be left unadmired. It's easy therefore for people to enter by the other door and survey the beauty of her back.[97]

Bilateral access certainly marks this temple as singular and is in keeping with its round architecture.[98] But in other respects the temple seems to have functioned in typical fashion. The narrator and his friends were able to enter the front door freely and even kiss the statue, but had to ask 'the woman responsible for keeping the keys'[99] to open the back door for them. In the story she told, the youth in question would often visit the shrine and gaze at the goddess all day—again implying liberal access. He would roll the astragals on 'the table' (before the cult image?) in hopes of a positive reply, meanwhile offering splendid gifts. As his frustration mounted he inscribed messages to the goddess on the temple walls and carved them in the trees in her precinct—again suggesting minimal surveillance. Finally he hid inside, just behind the door at sunset as 'the attendants closed the door from the outside in the normal way', locking him inside where he could have his way with the mesmerising image.[100]

These passages show how the temple was designed to evoke a panoramic tour of the goddess, but also that restrictions only applied after dusk, when the temple was locked. The bilateral doors were there to enable the voyeuristic gaze, while adding an extra dimension to the lighting of the sculpture in the round. But the doors also invited visitors to enter and approach the sensual image, even to touch it. This is in stark contrast with the temple of Aphrodite at Sikyon, where the radiant cult image was well out of reach as worshippers were only permitted the framed view from the doorway.[101] In both cases, however, the visual encounter with the goddess was incorporated in the spatial design and positioning of the doors.

So far temple doors have been shown to function as gateways to epiphanies via the cult image, but this was not always so direct. The temple of Apollo at Didyma is in this regard, as in so many other ways, an exception worth

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97 Pseudo-Lucian, *Erotes* 13: ἔστι δ᾽ ἀμφίθυρος ὁ νεὼς καὶ τοῖς θέλουσι κατὰ νώτου τὴν θεὸν ἰδεῖν ἀκριβῶς, ἵνα μηδὲν αὐτῆς ἀθαύμαστον ᾖ. δι᾽ εὐμαρείας οὖν ἐστι τῇ ἑτέρᾳ πύλῃ παρελθοῦσιν τὴν ὄπισθεν εὐμορφίαν διαθρῆσαι. (translation M.D. Macleod, *Loeb Classical Library* 432, 1967).

98 The mid-fourth century BCE *tholos* on the hill overlooking Cnidus is generally accepted as the temple of Aphrodite Euploia, see Corso (2007) 173, n. 2 with references.

99 Pseudo-Lucian, *Erotes* 14: κλειδοφύλακος ἐμπεπιστευμένου γυναίου. In paragraph 15 she is called a ζάκορος, or 'attending woman'.

100 Pseudo-Lucian, *Erotes* 16: συνήθως δὲ τῶν ζακόρων ἔξωθεν τὴν θύραν ἐφελκυσαμένων. At Cos the priestess opened the temple at dawn, but only on the designated days (*Iscr.Cos* ED 236).

101 Paus. 2.10.4, discussed above.

considering. Work began on the Hellenistic temple after Seleucus I recovered the Canachus cult image of Apollo that had been confiscated during the Persian wars (Paus. 1.16.3).[102] The architects were Paeonius, famous for the Artemision in Ephesus, and Daphnis of Milete (Vitruvius 7, *praef.* 16). Although the 'largest temple in the world' (Strabo 14.1.5) was never finished, it nonetheless reflects the union of cult requirements with state of the art technology and conceptual design of the era—our most important source of information comes from the complexity of space left by ruins themselves. Unlike its rival the Artemision in Ephesus, the Didymaion was not simply an updated version of its Archaic predecessor; instead the architects here pulled all the stops on the baroque elements of Hellenistic architecture, as Gottfried Gruben observes.[103] Gruben further observes how the temple was designed from the inside out as it had to take into account the sacred spring and laurel grove.[104] From the exterior, however, the temple of Apollo at Didyma would have been reminiscent of its counterpart in Ephesus, situated on a grand stylobate with a dipteral Ionic peristyle (see fig. 11.3). The columns of this peristyle were, however, much closer together, creating the impression of a thick *Säulenwald* upon approach.[105] Their density would have occluded the view of much of the *cella*, so that as one climbed the fourteen steps to the entrance, rapidly passing from the brightness of the *temenos* (at daytime) to the deep shade of the peristyle, the colossal door would appear to rise. With its imposing height, 14 m, the opening would have made quite an impression as one entered the *pronaos* (fig. 11.3).[106] This may well have been the final destination for most people, since they were stopped by the high threshold, 1.46 m above the floor of the *pronaos*—clearly not meant for humans to cross (fig. 11.4).[107] A comparable situation may be found in the temple of Apollo Delion on the Palatia islet of

102 Scheer (2000) 252–257.

103 Gruben (1986 [1966]) 359–375, esp. 368. Also Pollitt (1986) 236–338. For architecture and setting, see among others Wiegand and Knackfuß (1941), Voigtländer (1975), Parke (1986), and more recently Bumke and Breder (2016).

104 Gruben (1986 [1966]) 367, figs. 303–305 give an impression of the structural differences in elevation.

105 Gruben (1986 [1966]) 370.

106 Lucian compares Assyrian Hera's temple to the great temples of Ionia in Syr. D. 30: 'as you mount [the stairs], even the great hall exhibits a wonderful spectacle and it is ornamented with golden doors' (translation H.A. Strong and J. Garstang, 1913).

107 Günther (1971) 42–43 and 119–123. Haussollier (1920) believed the consultants could enter the *sekos*, or *adyton* under guidance, followed by Fontenrose (1988) 80–81.



FIGURE 11.3 *Reconstruction of the entrance to the temple of Apollo at Didyma, showing the great 'Erscheinungstür',* Apollontempel in Didyma bei Milet*, print by Georg Niemann (1841–1912), 1912.*
PHOTO: JOHANNES LAURENTIUS, ANTIKENSAMMLUNG, STAATLICHE MUSEEN ZU BERLIN-PREUSSISCHER KULTURBESITZ.



FIGURE 11.4 *Students gathered in the* pronaos *of the Didymaion, with one on the threshold of the 'Erscheinungstür' showing the difference in height.*
PHOTO: CHR. WILLIAMSON 2012.

Naxos where the great door, now an isolated ruin (fig. 11.5), stood on a threshold of 1.2 m above the *pronaos* floor.[108]

The great portal of the Didymaion opened onto the higher mid-chamber that functioned as a bridge connecting the inner and outer spaces of the temple (fig. 11.6). It has been suggested that this was used in connection with the consultation of the oracle or some other ritual performance.[109] The two Corinthian columns in the centre signalled the heightened sacrality of this zone and the stairwells, called 'labyrinths', flanking the chamber and leading to the roof terrace certainly suggest a ritual purpose and a mediatory role between inside and outside.[110]

Besides its sheer size, another aspect that would have struck the supplicant would have been the change in light. As discussed above, most temples created a sequence of light decay from the exterior or peristyle to the *pronaos* and finally the *cella*. The Didymaion, however, inverted this in that the interior of the temple, the *sekos*,[111] was open to the sky as it contained the oracular spring and sacred laurel grove. The real entrance was through the small vaulted tunnels leading from either side of the *pronaos*, under the mid-chamber, down to the *sekos*. Opposite the great door in the mid-chamber were three smaller doors that opened onto the *sekos* through a monumental staircase of twenty-four steps leading down to the 'sunken' ground level below. Unlike the great portal, these had leaves, adorned with ivory donated by the Ptolemy XIII.[112] When open, the reflected light from the bright *sekos*, and the darkness of the *pronaos* with the dense forest of columns, would have ensured that any appearance in the doorway would have been backlit, heightening the dramatic effect (fig. 11.4 and 11.6).[113]

The grand opening had no leaves and was always open. Contrary to most temple doors, this one offered no view of the cult image. Meanwhile the Canachus statue, returned by Seleucus I, resided in a small tetrastyle temple down at the back of the *sekos*, as a temple within a temple. With the depth of the *sekos* and the upward angle of vision it would have been impossible for

108 Gruben (1986 [1966]) 347.

109 Günther (1971); Fontenrose (1988) 80–81; Oesterheld (2008).

110 Also discussed in Miles (1998–1999) 22.

111 Also called an 'adyton', e.g., in *I.Didyma* 427; Herodotos 1.159.3. 'Adyton' meaning 'not to be entered' is discussed above.

112 In the lists of dedications in *I.Didyma* 218II, lines 6–10 and 394, 13–18, discussed in Fontenrose (1988) 37–38. Other sponsors of the construction of the doors and their walls are listed in *I.Didyma* 25A, 26AB, and 27AB.

113 Pollitt discusses the Didymaion in the context of theatricality, Pollitt (1986) 230, 236–238.



FIGURE 11.5 *The 'Erscheinungstür' from the temple of Apollo Delion at Palatia on Naxos.*
PHOTO: MARK CARTWRIGHT OF ANCIENT HISTORY ENCYCLOPEDIA (WWW.ANCIENT.EU).

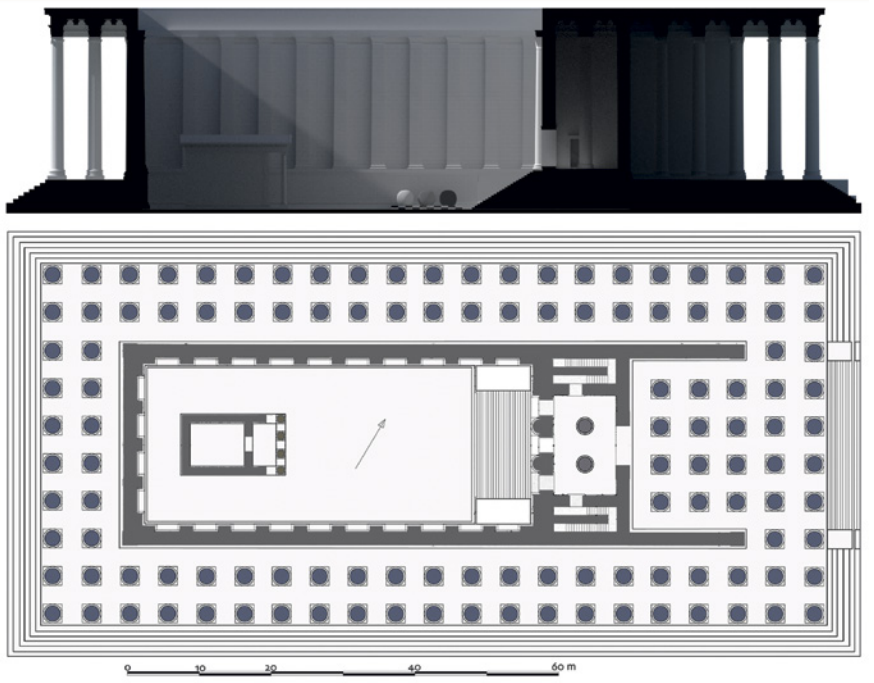


FIGURE 11.6 *Plan and cross-section of the temple of Apollo at Didyma, showing the sunlight from the west at an elevation of 36° (summer), illuminating the adyton and mid-chamber (after H. Knackfuß and T. Wiegand (1941)* Didyma I. Die Baubeschreibung, *Berlin, p.8, z.146).*
ELEVATION: JAN KÖSTER, DAI ISTANBUL.

ordinary visitors to see even the *naiskos* from the great doorway. In fact, this is the prime reason that Joseph Fontenrose argued for an 'open' *sekos*, with public admission, since otherwise visitors would have been deprived any view of the renowned image.[114] Yet whether the image was ever displayed to the public, e.g. via the great door, or restricted to initiates or cult personnel within the *sekos*, remains unknown.[115] What is clear at this temple is that there is an opening that looks like a door but that is not for entering, and that there are entries that do not readily look like doors.

Although hardly representative of Greek temples, the Didymaion nonetheless is a clear example that form was not always married to function, with doors sometimes taking on a life of their own. This *Erscheinungstür* clearly had a ritual purpose different from other temple doors.[116] It was a portal that symbolized passage, but not in the kinetic sense. Instead it connected the inner and outer spaces of the sanctuary—i.e. the restricted and the public zones—and engaged them in dialogue. Creating this fantastic setting for the reception of the oracle is a vivid portrayal of Gladigow's 'guided perception'.[117] The great door would have dwarfed the ephemeral humans standing in the obscurity of the *pronaos*, underscoring the transience of their existence in the presence of the god.

Conclusion

Pliny tells the story of Chersiphron, architect of the temple for Artemis in Ephesus, who was troubled to the point of suicide about his inability to raise the monolithic lintel over the main entrance, until Artemis appeared to him in a dream, telling him not to worry and that she had already taken care of it. When he woke up the next day, the lintel was miraculously in place, just as she had said (*HN* 36.21). While this story demonstrates the power of the goddess and the immense size of her temple, it also reflects the importance of the door of the temple to the divine, at least in the human mind. An integral part of the overall design, the main entrance was an expression of the collective imagination that was unique to each community and cult. Although the first

114 Fontenrose (1988) 80–81.

115 Scheer (2000) 255.

116 Used for the monumental doors at Naxos and at Didyma by Büsing-Kolbe (1978) and Gruben 1986 [1966] 347. Also Scheer (2000) 255. Also called the *Orakeltür* in Voigtländer (1975) 104.

117 Gladigow (1990).

and foremost function was to house the divine image and dedications, temples were spaces of ritual performance, including prayer and sacrifice, within the walls of the *cella*. Recent studies indicate that temple interiors were more accessible to the general public than was once believed, although in most cases the chances of gaining entry still depended on citizenship, gender, age, status as free person, and time of year.

Yet temple doors did much more than just facilitate access. They were transitional zones, framing the cult image and mediating human and divine spheres. Changing light played a strong role in the permeability of the *cella*, with a progression from the brightness of the *temenos* to the rhythmic shade of the peristyle to the afterglow in the *pronaos* and its reflection through the entry of the *cella*. If the cult image was the climax of the temple, then the door was the climax of its antechamber. Sculpture, inscriptions and dedications marked the sense of place in the *pronaos*, where people lingered. This is the side of the doorway that received an elaborate frame—occasionally the surfaces of the leaves were even decorated with narrative scenes, referencing the marvel within. The frame enhanced the passage to the *cella*, but also heralded the presence of the god via the cult image. Doorways mark separate 'event boundaries', signalling the body and mind to prepare for a new experience.[118] Main doors in Greek temples created the right context and forged a sense of encounter with the deity—via prayer and sacrifice, the 'ritual gaze', an oracular voice, or even tactile touch—a hallmark of distinction in an increasingly competitive world.

As stated in the beginning, the door of the temple was not a barrier between the sacred and the profane, but a filter of visibility and access. From the *temenos* outside in, it was the last point of contact with the world within the *temenos*, and the first point of encounter with the divine through the cult image. Although Pausanias (9.6.6) noted the portentous spider webs across the doorway of Theban Demeter, Aelian has them spun across the face of her cult image (Ael. *VH* 12.57). The confusion makes perfect sense when we consider the door as the face of the god, a portal of epiphany.[119]

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118 Radvansky and Krawietz, et al. (2011) 1643, discussed above.

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LSCG F. Sokolowski (1969) *Lois sacrées des cités grecques*, Travaux et Mémoires, fasc. 18. Paris.

LSS F. Sokolowski (1962) *Lois sacrées des cités grecques. Supplément*. Paris.

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CHAPTER 12

The Other Door to the Sanctuary

The Apse and Divine Entry in the Early Byzantine Church

Brooke Shilling

Although holy figures could be seen and heard patrolling the entrances of holy places, according to saints' lives and miracle tales, they did not have to use doors. Holy figures and the Holy Spirit are usually said to come, appear, or descend miraculously; otherwise they are simply seen or heard in the context of a vision.[1] Mention of a door or entryway would perhaps undermine the miraculous nature of the saint and his or her appearance. In ekphraseis on early Byzantine churches, divine presence in the church is often taken for granted following Eusebius' description of the cathedral at Tyre around 315.[2] It follows from the creation of a splendid and holy space in the context of panegyric, but is rooted more importantly in the Eucharist and also in relics.[3] Likewise, the liturgical commentaries of Maximus the Confessor (c. 630) and Germanus I of Constantinople (c. 730) affirm that the presence of God dwells in the church and in those who partake in the mysteries.[4] In the *Mystagogia*, Maximus further describes the church as an image of the visible and invisible universe, where the nave corresponds to the earth and the sanctuary to heaven.[5] Except for a few examples where the divine emerges from an image in the context of a miraculous vision, the apse or east wall of the church is not discussed in texts as an entrance *per se*,[6] but the notion of divine presence in the sanctuary prompted artists to render the apse conch as a point of entry, leading into the

1 The verbs used are unremarkable: come = ἔρχομαι; come or visit = ἐπιφοιτάω; appear = φαίνομαι; descend = καταβαίνω.

2 Eus. *HE* 10.4, 2–72 (LCL), 399–445.

3 An anonymous Greek hymn composed in 562 for the rededication of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople anchors God's presence in the church to the Eucharist. Greek edition: Trypanis (1968) 139–147. Palmer and Rodley (1988) 140–141.

4 Max. Conf. *Myst.* 21 and 24 in Stead (1982) 95–96, 102; Germ. Const. *Hist. Myst.* 1 in Meyendorff (1984) 56–57. Both commentaries are discussed extensively by Boudignon in chapter 3 of this volume.

5 Max. Conf. *Myst.* 2–3 in Stead (1982) 68–71.

6 The term 'triumphal arch (*arcus triumphalis*)' was not applied to church architecture until the ninth century, when it first appears in the *Liber Pontificalis*, denoting the transverse arch marking the entrance to the sanctuary in S. Prassede, built by Pope Pascal I (817–824): *LP*,

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church from heaven. Artists, unlike writers, were confronted with the problem of how to depict the act of coming or appearing miraculously. In contrast to many of the papers in this volume, this paper concerns the transition not from the worldly to the divine, but from the divine to the worldly, and the sanctification of the worldly resulting from divine entry into the church.

Since the fourth century, the presence of Christ in the church and especially in the sanctuary, the site of the Eucharist, was commemorated and visualized in apse decoration. The earliest examples known in Italy show him seated or standing among the apostles and underscore the relationship between the apostles and the clergy, who were charged with communicating the Word of God.[7] From at least the sixth century onwards, theophanies of Christ, conveyed by a mandorla of light or by an accumulation of clouds, present the apse conch or apse wall as a privileged point of entry for the divine in the church and emphasize the presence of God in relation to the Eucharist.[8] In the apse mosaic of the Transfiguration at the Monastery of St Catherine at Mount Sinai (548–565), for example, the divinity of Christ, symbolized by the mandorla, is revealed to the apostles Peter, James, and John on Mount Tabor in the presence of Moses and Elijah (fig. 12.1). According to Jaś Elsner, the composition completes a hierarchy of visions that begins on the upper east wall with the partial and imperfect theophanies of Moses, who heard but did not see God on Mount Sinai.[9] Like the favoured apostles on Mount Tabor, the monks and pilgrims in the church are rewarded with the true vision of Christ in the apse, akin to the spiritual vision of God in the Eucharist. Indeed, the uncommon absence of landscape in the mosaic has been interpreted by Elsner as a means of incorporating the viewer in the theophany by suggesting that he already stands on the peak of Mount Tabor, equated with the peak of Mount Sinai.

In Rome, the seventh-century apse mosaic of San Venanzio in Laterano (640–642) shows a bust of Christ and two angels emerging from the clouds in an ahistorical or 'ecclesiological' theophany, above a long line of intermediaries, including the Virgin Mary, saints, and papal donors.[10] Its dedicatory

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100.8 in Davis (1995) 9–10; Krautheimer (1942) 34. It builds on the idea of the sanctuary as a gateway to heaven or salvation.

7 Brenk (2010). I do not agree with Brenk that the same mosaics fail to allude to Christ's presence in the sanctuary with respect to the Eucharist. See Spieser (1998).

8 Without illustrating a specific liturgical prayer or rite: Grabar (1946) vol. 2, 129–234; Ihm (1960) 42–51; Spieser (2001).

9 Elsner (1994).

10 Thunø's 'ecclesiological theophany' reveals Christ as the body of the Church to the worshipper in the church: Thunø (2015) 94–96, 105–107.



FIGURE 12.1 *Mount Sinai, Monastery of St Catherine, apse mosaic.*
REPRODUCED THROUGH THE COURTESY OF THE MICHIGAN-PRINCETON-ALEXANDRIA EXPEDITION TO MOUNT SINAI.

inscription runs along the base of the conch and refers to the pious vows (*pia vota*) of the patron, Pope John IV, and to the prostrate worshipper (*quisquis … Christem pronus adorans*), who offers his effusive prayers (*effusasque preces*) to heaven (*ad aethra*) by approaching (*gradiens*) the apse mosaic.[11] In other words, the mosaic affords a vision of the divine, albeit a partial one, to the worshipper in the church, while serving as a portal for his prayers, directed outwards to Christ in heaven. At Sinai and in Rome, therefore, the early Christian apse mosaic could be conceived as a porous divide, which allowed Christ to

11 Although the inscription at San Venanzio corresponds to the formula laid out by Thunø for several Roman apse mosaics of the sixth to ninth centuries by referring to the papal patron, the titular saint, and divine light, it is the only inscription that describes the apse mosaic as a portal for the worshipper's prayers: Thunø (2015) 13–29, 210–211. The inscription at Sant' Agnese mentions the beholder, but not his prayers.

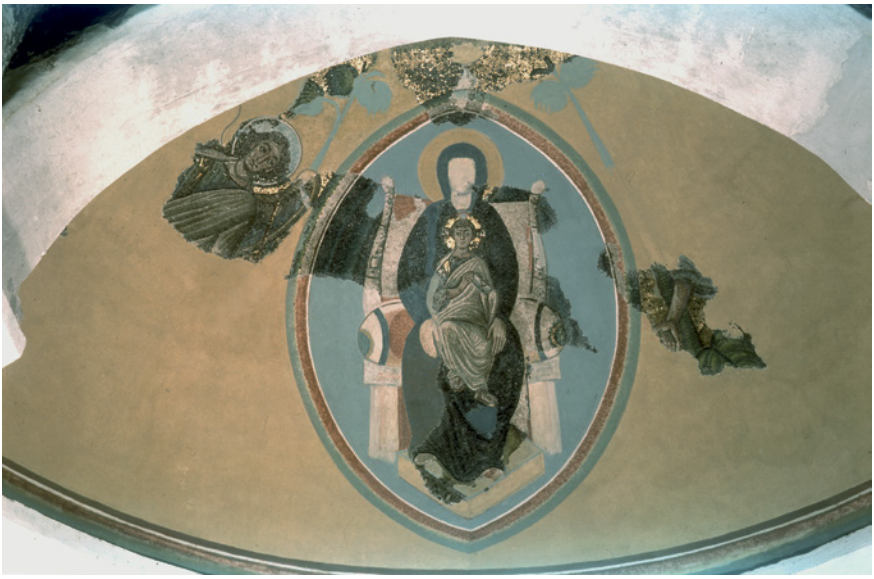


FIGURE 12.2 *Lythrankomi, Church of the Panagia Kanakariá, apse mosaic.* SOURCE: IMAGE COLLECTIONS AND FIELDWORK ARCHIVES, DUMBARTON OAKS, TRUSTEES FOR HARVARD UNIVERSITY, WASHINGTON, D.C.

hover in the sanctuary directly above the Eucharist, as the prayers of the faithful were transported to heaven.

In place of the mature, adult Christ, the figures of the Virgin Mary and the Christ Child were introduced to the apse in the fifth century, although the earliest surviving example comes from the first half of the sixth century. The poorly preserved mosaic of the Virgin and Child jointly surrounded by a mandorla appeared in the apse of the church of the Panagia Kanakariá at Lythrankomi in Cyprus (fig. 12.2).[12] Seated frontally on a lyre-backed throne, the pair was flanked by two archangels in a paradisiacal landscape and encircled by medallions of apostles on the soffit of the arch. The inclusion of the Virgin Mary in the mandorla, signifying the divine light of Christ in the context of a theophany, is unparalleled at this early date and was rarely copied in later Byzantine art in contrast to the medieval West.[13] Instead, alternative pictorial devices were developed to convey her presence in the church and sanctuary,

12 Eleven figural fragments are now on display in the Byzantine Museum of Nicosia. For a date in the first half of the sixth century: Shilling (2013) ch. 1. More restricted dates within the same period were first argued by Megaw and Hawkins (1977) and Sacopoulo (1975).

13 Grabar (1955).

while drawing greater attention to the apse conch as a threshold to be crossed. This paper explores the form and function of these new motifs in two early Byzantine apse mosaics, also on the island of Cyprus, in the church of the Panagia Angeloktistos at Kiti and the church of the Panagia tis Kyras at Livadia.

Dated to the second half of the sixth century, the apse mosaic at Kiti represents the standing Virgin and Child flanked by the archangels Michael and Gabriel against a flat gold background (figs. 12.3–4).[14] Seated on his mother's left arm, the Christ Child holds a scroll in his left hand and gestures with his right. Approaching the pair on either side, the archangels carry gold staffs adorned with precious stones, likening them to imperial palace guards, especially the *ostiarioi* or doorkeepers in the Book of Ceremonies.[15] They also present translucent orbs to the Christ Child. In the soffit of the apse, the upper border of the mosaic illustrates six fountains flanked by pairs of confronted or addorsed stags, parrots, and ducks.[16] Enveloped in acanthus leaves, they symbolize the living creatures of the water, air, and land, which God created on the fifth and sixth days in the Book of Genesis.

The footstool on which the Virgin stands is a very striking feature of the apse mosaic at Kiti. It has been pointed out by others that its position in front of the lower geometric borders of the mosaic creates the impression that the figures are hovering in the space of the apse,[17] but never has the function and meaning of this illusion been explored. First, it is necessary to consider the form and placement of the footstool. Fairly standard in design, the rectangular platform is jeweled and footed. All four feet of the footstool, only three of which are visible in perspective, overlap the lower geometric and crowstep borders of the mosaic, so that the Virgin and Child are not contained within the frame of the conch, but are situated in front of the apse wall. By contrast, the archangels on either side are stationed on the green ground line and their wings are overlapped by the white interior border of the mosaic.[18] As a consequence, the archangels appear behind the Virgin and Child and remain, at least temporarily, beyond the apse wall, configured as the threshold between heaven and earth.

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14 For a date in the second half of the sixth century: Megaw (1985); Fischer (2007); Foulias (2008); Shilling (2013) ch. 2.

15 Moffatt and Tall (2012) vol. 1, book 1: 10, 23–24. Vogt (1935) vol. 1, book 1: 7, 18–19; vol. 1, commentary: 43.

16 Shilling (2016).

17 Megaw (1974) 75; Michaelides (1992) 119, 122.

18 Or in the case of Michael, the white, blue, and buff-colored borders, suggesting a mistake by the mosaicist or the work of different hands.



FIGURE 12.3 *Kiti, Church of the Panagia Angeloktistos, apse mosaic.*
SOURCE: IMAGE COLLECTIONS AND FIELDWORK ARCHIVES, DUMBARTON OAKS, TRUSTEES FOR HARVARD UNIVERSITY, WASHINGTON, D.C.



FIGURE 12.4 *Kiti, Church of the Panagia Angeloktistos, apse mosaic.*
SOURCE: IMAGE COLLECTIONS AND FIELDWORK ARCHIVES, DUMBARTON OAKS, TRUSTEES FOR HARVARD UNIVERSITY, WASHINGTON, D.C.

Other details in the mosaic contribute to an impression of forward movement and emphasize their passage into the church. While the upper body of the Virgin remains fixed at the center of the composition, her lower body and footstool drift slightly to the left, compromising the symmetry of the composition. As a result, ten and a half units of the geometric border appear to the right of the footstool and only nine and a half to the left, reconstructing the area of loss below the archangel Michael. Although one could characterize the shift as an attempt to counterbalance the Christ Child, who is held on the right, the flutter of the Virgin's mantle on the lower right side implies that she is moving forward. The robes of the archangels are also swept back and to the right as they approach the central figures. Finally, the glow or 'secondary silhouette' around the figures, articulated in buff-colored stone, supports the optical illusion by separating them from the gold background.[19]

19 Winfield (2005) 25.

The motif of the projecting footstool is employed on a more modest scale in the lost apse mosaic at Livadia, where the Virgin stands alone, her arms outstretched, without the Child (fig. 12.5a–b). At least two figures, probably archangels, appeared alongside the Virgin on the east wall.[20] Here, the footstool is rendered as a simple jeweled platform without feet. Along with the Virgin's lower body, the footstool drifts to the right and interrupts the lower border of the composition, comprised of four rows of tesserae, two blue and two white.[21] With the mosaic dated to the last quarter of the sixth or first half of the seventh century,[22] the projecting footstool at Livadia may well have been copied from the mosaic at Kiti, but its presence in two out of three mosaics in Cyprus suggests that the motif was more widespread.

Nevertheless, there is little evidence of this motif outside of Cyprus until the post-iconoclastic period, when the Virgin appears more frequently in the apse. In the eleventh-century mosaic of St Sophia in Kiev, the footstool of the orant Virgin projects into the decorative border above the cornice.[23] Again in Cyprus, the footstool reaches the edge of the conch in the twelfth-century church of the Virgin at Trikomo, where it is placed in front of a red and gold border inscribed with an anonymous plea for intercession.[24] The projecting footstool also appears in the medieval West, in an eleventh-century manuscript in the Madrid Biblioteca Nacional (Vitr. 20-6, fol. 52r). In a scene of the Ascension, the orant Virgin stands on a footstool which overlaps the painted frame, while the feet of the angels supporting the medallion of Christ also protrude.[25] Without suggesting that every example should be interpreted in the same way, I would like to explore several explanations for the image in the mosaics of Cyprus: formal or stylistic, liturgical and hierotopical, and intercessory.[26]

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20 The church at Livadia has not been fully excavated, but a probe into the masonry of the south wall of the sanctuary revealed the bare feet of a standing figure in mosaic on the east wall. A pendant figure probably appeared to the north and may still exist behind the north wall of the medieval building: Megaw and Hawkins (1976) 365.

21 The rightward shift of the Virgin's lower body and footstool is seen most clearly in the reconstruction of the mosaic by Megaw and Hawkins (fig. 12.5b).

22 Shilling (2013) ch. 3.

23 Lazarev (1966) 31–77, 226–227.

24 Stylianou (1985) 488; Carr and Morrocco (1991) 47.

25 It is significant that Christ appears in bust form, removed from the scene as it breaks through its frame: Kessler (1998) 1196–1197, fig. 19.

26 The neologism 'hierotopy' refers to the creation of sacred space: see Lidov (2006) and the General Introduction to this volume.



FIGURE 12.5A *Livadia, Church of the Panagia tis Kyras, apse mosaic.* SOURCE: IMAGE COLLECTIONS AND FIELDWORK ARCHIVES, DUMBARTON OAKS, TRUSTEES FOR HARVARD UNIVERSITY, WASHINGTON, D.C.

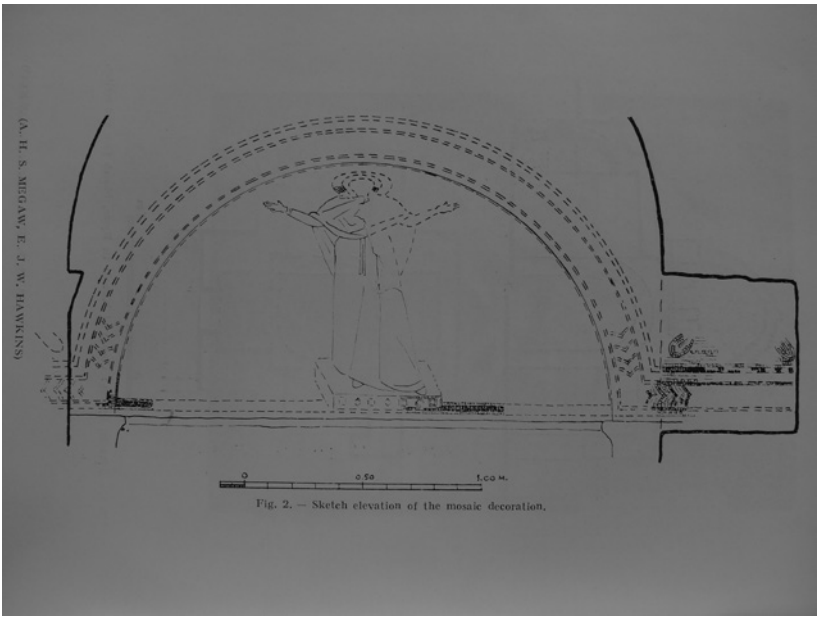


FIGURE 12.5B *Line drawing of the mosaic at Livadia. From: A.H.S. Megaw and E.J.W. Hawkins (1976) 'A fragmentary mosaic of the orant Virgin in Cyprus,' in M. Berza and E. Stănecsü (eds)* Actes du XIV[e] Congrès International des Études Byzantines, Bucarest, 6–12 septembre 1971, *vol. 3: 363–66, fig. 2.*

To an extent, the projecting footstool is a conventional means of establishing hierarchy in Byzantine art. The footstool itself (ὑποπόδιον or σουππέδιον) is defined in the *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* as 'a normal concomitant of the throne and a symbol of relative superiority within sacred or social hierarchies'.[27] The physical elevation provided by the footstool is often used in conjunction with central placement, increased scale, frontality, foregrounding, and differing modes of representation to emphasize the most powerful figure or figures. An excellent example is found in the missorium of Theodosius I in the Real Academia de la Historia in Madrid, produced in 388 for the tenth anniversary of his reign (fig. 12.6).[28] The emperor is enthroned at the center of the composition, framed by an architrave and flanked by his sons and co-emperors Valentinian II and Arcadius. The emperor is the largest figure in the scene, followed by Valentinian to his right in the place of preference, and Arcadius to his left, who appears larger than the attendants. Their footstools are also distinguished by size and placement. The emperor's footstool remains the largest and projects into the foreground, encroaching on the ground line that delineates the lower zone, where the personification of Earth reclines.

It is the quality of extending beyond the frame, and at Kiti well beyond, that signals something more than convention. Although the Virgin Mary descends into the sanctuary from heaven, the appearance of floating in midair finds parallel in levitation miracles described in saints' lives. In the seventh-century *Life of Mary of Egypt*, the monk Zosimas is living alone in the desert during Lent when he observes the shadowy figure of the saint. He pursues her further into the desert and convinces her to pray for him. Like the Virgin in the apse at Livadia, she stretches out her hands to pray. Zosimas bows down his head, but fails to recognize her whispered words as prayers, and after some time, he looks up and sees her 'elevated (ὑψωθεῖσαν) about one cubit above the earth, hanging in the air (τῷ ἀέρι κρεμαμένην) and praying in this way'.[29] At first the monk is terrified and fears she may be a demon, but when she speaks directly to him and makes the sign of the cross, he identifies her as a servant of God and throws himself on the ground before her. The formula is repeated more or less in later Lives, for example in the *Life of Ioannikios* by Peter the Monk (c. 847),[30] the *Life of Irene of Chrysobalanton* (tenth century),[31]

27 'Footstool', in Kazhdan and Talbot (1991), vol. 2, 795.

28 Cat. no. 64 in Weitzmann (1979) 74–76; Leader-Newby (2004) 11–59; Parada López de Corselas (2015) 227–233.

29 Sophronius of Jerusalem, *Vita sanctae Mariae Aegyptiae*, PG 87.3708D. English translation in Kouli (1996) 78–79 (ch. 15).

30 Sullivan (1998) 280–281 (ch. 25). Greek text in *Acta Sanctorum*, Nov. 2.1, 398B.

31 Rosenqvist (1986) 74–81 (ch. 16).



FIGURE 12.6 *Missorium of Theodosius I, Real Academia de la Historia, Madrid.* SOURCE: MANUEL PARADA LÓPEZ DE CORSELAS, 2015.

the *Life of Andrew the Fool* (mid-tenth century),[32] and the *Life of Luke of Steiris* (after 961).[33] Typically, the saint ascends to a height of one or two cubits (up to one meter) after praying intensely for an extended period of time.[34] Although not in the *Life of Mary of Egypt*, the levitation is often observed secretly by the author or an acquaintance of the author. In other early saints' lives, levitation results from very different circumstances. In the third-century *Passion of Perpetua and Felicity*, Perpetua's levitation during a vision of combat in

32 Rydén (1995) 40–41, 98–103. A late seventh-century date for the *Life* has also been proposed by Mango (1982).

33 C. and R. Connor (1994) 15 (ch. 7).

34 In the *Lives* of Mary of Egypt, Ioannikios, Irene of Chrysobalanton, and Andrew the Fool, the same word, κρέμαμαι (to be hung up or suspended) is used to describe levitation. The verb is used in conjunction with ὑψόω (to lift high or raise up) in the *Life of Mary of Egypt* and with ἀείρω/αἴρω (to lift up or raise) in the *Life of Andrew the Fool*, both in passive forms. Different words appear in the *Life of Luke of Steiris*: ἀνάγω (to lift up or take up) and ἀφιστάνω (to stand apart from, e.g. the ground).

the arena in Carthage foreshadows her triumph over death: 'And raised up (*sublata*) into the air, I began to strike him as though I trod not the earth.'[35] In the seventh-century *Life of Theodore of Sykeon*, the saint is the agent of levitation, as he raises from the ground a boy Arsinus (chapter 46), a woman Irene (chapter 71), and an unnamed man (chapter 93) in separate miracles in order to expel the demons which possess them.[36] Like descending and hovering in midair, levitation, or the ability to induce levitation in the case of Theodore, is a manifestation of supreme holiness and a means of demonstrating this holiness to others, including those who are prone to doubt. The saints participate in the divinity of Christ by exhibiting divine virtues and powers, like levitating or working miracles, and taking on aspects of the divine appearance, like a shining face. At Kiti and Livadia, the mystical image also serves to establish and indeed sanctify the sacred space of the sanctuary.

More importantly, the manifestation of the Virgin or Virgin and Child by means of an optical illusion evokes the visions of holy figures experienced in Christian churches. In the *Spiritual Meadow* of John Moschus (c. 600), visions in the sanctuary are associated with rites of consecration. Visions of divine entry in particular were expected during the *epiklesis*, or invocation of the Holy Spirit, as is clear from instances when they failed to occur. In chapter twenty-five, a monk at Choziba accidentally recites the prayer over the Eucharist, which he had memorized, while carrying the offerings to the sanctuary. When the priest John, later bishop of Caesarea, performs the liturgy, he does not behold (ἐθεάσατο) according to custom the coming (τὴν ἐπιφοίτησιν) of the Holy Spirit.[37] He learns subsequently through the vision of an angel in the sacristy that the offerings were already consecrated. A similar episode in chapter twenty-seven tells of an elderly priest in Cilicia, whose estate had complained to the bishop about his manner of conducting the service. When the bishop questions the priest, he explains: 'until I see (ἴδω) the Holy Spirit overshadowing the holy sanctuary, I do not begin the service. When I see (θεάσωμαι) the coming (τὴν ἐπιφοίτησιν) of the Holy Spirit, then I celebrate the liturgy.'[38] Yet again in chapter 150, an Italian bishop interrupts himself repeatedly while reciting the prayer of consecration over the Eucharist. Only after the pope Agapetus

35 English translation adapted from Shewring (1931) ch. 10, as reprinted in Halsall, *Internet Medieval Sourcebook*. See also Bremmer and Formisano (2012) 19, 28.

36 Festugière (1970) I: 41, 58–59, 76–77; II: 44, 61–62, 79–80. In all three cases the verb κρέμαμαι is used. In the first episode, it is combined with κουφίζω (to lift up or elevate) in the passive. English translation in Dawes and Baynes (1977) 121–112, 135, 151–152.

37 Joh. Moschus, *Prat. Spir*. 25 (PG 87.2872A).

38 Joh. Moschus, *Prat. Spir.* 27 (PG 87.2873C). Translation Wortley (1992) 19.

(535–536), who is in attendance, expels a sinful deacon from the sanctuary do they perceive (εἶδον) the coming/presence (τὴν ἐπιφοίτησιν, τὴν παρουσία) of the Holy Spirit. At the same time, they witness a miracle when the curtain hanging above the altar lifts itself and overshadows the entire sanctuary for three hours.[39] In each of these examples, there is no reference to the apse or fabric of the church as a point of entry. The only material object to play a role in these miracles is the curtain of chapter 150.[40]

However, there are two prominent episodes in the *History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria*, where visions of divine entry are provoked by monumental paintings in the sanctuary. The compilation and translation of the text from Coptic sources into Arabic has been ascribed to Severus of Al-Ashmunein in the tenth century, or alternatively to Mawhūb Ibn Manṣūr Ibn Mufarriǧ in the eleventh century.[41] The episode in the *Life* of the Patriarch Benjamin (622–661) which concerns us here was taken from a hagiographic source, the *Book of the Consecration of the Sanctuary of Benjamin*, attributed to Agathon, Benjamin's successor and the thirty-ninth patriarch of Alexandria (661–677).[42] The patriarch receives a vision during the consecration of the church of St Macarius in the Wadi Natrun, which took place between 28 December 645 or 646 and 3 January 646 or 647:

> And I went up to the sanctuary, and said the prayer over the chrism, and took it to anoint the holy sanctuary. And I heard a voice saying: 'Observe, O bishop!' So when I marked the sanctuary with the chrism, I saw the hand of the Lord Christ, the Saviour, upon the walls anointing the sanctuary.

39 Joh. Moschus, *Prat. Spir.* 150 (PG 87.3016B–C).

40 On the sanctuary curtain in Byzantine churches, see Lidov (2010) and (2014), discussed by van Opstall in the General Introduction to this volume.

41 English translation in Evetts (1904–1914). Continued from the year 849 by 'Abd al-Masih et al. (1943–1974). The history of the text is analyzed by Den Heijer (1989). According to Den Heijer, the earliest *Lives* 1–26 come from the Coptic *History of the Church*, made up of a Coptic translation of Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History* and the contribution of an original author. *Lives* 27–42, including the *Life* of Benjamin, are based on a lost original history rewritten in Coptic by a monk, George the archdeacon, secretary of the forty-second patriarch Simon (d. 701), although the *Life* of Benjamin is supplemented by another source. *Lives* 56–65, including the *Life* of Philotheus (below), are attributed to Michael, bishop of Tinnīs, writing in Coptic in 1051. Den Heijer disputes the traditional attribution of the Arabic text to Severus, arguing that Mawhūb was the primary redactor.

42 Coquin (1975). Coquin argues that the original language of the text was Greek, while Orlandi argues for Sahidic Coptic in a review of Coquin: Orlandi (1977).

The patriarch is overtaken by fear and declares the sanctuary 'a dreadful place', 'the house of God in truth', 'the gate of heaven, and the resting-place of the most High'. Agathon, the future patriarch and author of the account, was present in the sanctuary during Benjamin's vision. Although he did not experience the vision himself, he describes the patriarch as having the appearance of fire, his face shining with light. Benjamin recites the eighty-third psalm and consecrates the rest of the church before returning to the sanctuary to describe his vision in detail to the brothers of St Macarius:

> I have been carried away today to the Paradise of the Lord of Sabaoth, and I have heard voices that cannot be uttered nor conceived in the heart of man, as the wise apostle Paul says. Believe me, my brethren, I have seen today the glory of Christ filling this dome and I beheld with my own sinful eyes the holy palm, the sublime hand of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour, anointing the altar-board of this holy sanctuary. I have witnessed today the seraphim and the angels and the archangels, and all the holy hosts of the Most High, praising the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost in this dome. And I saw the father of the patriarchs [Macarius] and bishops and doctors of the orthodox Church, standing among us here in the midst of the brethren, his sons, with joy.[43]

The original decoration of the sanctuary does not survive for comparison, but a standard Coptic apse painting, here from chapel seventeen in the Monastery of Apa Apollo at Bawit, accords nicely with Benjamin's vision (fig. 12.7). In the upper zone, the divine Christ is supported by the four living beings and flanked by archangels, while the apostles, two local abbots, and the Virgin Mary witness the miracle below. Other saints, including bishops and doctors, most likely appeared on the walls of the church of St Macarius.[44] Such theophanies of Christ do not conform to a single vision, but conflate elements from the visions of Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Revelation, and from the Ascension of Christ, in order to convey the unity of Scripture and to encapsulate sacred time. Modelled on the visions of the prophets, however, the vision of the patriarch inverts the

43 Evetts (1904–1914) vol. 1: 2, 510–551; Coquin (1975) 130–139. The dome mentioned is the sanctuary or square *haikal* (temple), for 'when [Benjamin] had completed the consecration of the dome, he went out into the body of the church, to consecrate its walls and columns; and at the end he returned and sat in the dome.' The decoration of the sanctuary of Benjamin now dates to the twelfth century.

44 Hunt (2004) esp. 72.



FIGURE 12.7 *Bawit, Monastery of Apa Apollo, chapel 17, watercolor reconstruction. After J. Clédat (1906)* Le monastère et la nécropole de Baouît, *pl. 41.*

narrative of the Ascension: Christ is not carried off to heaven, but descends into the church to reveal his divinity.

An analogous episode in the *History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria* involves the sixty-third patriarch Philotheus (979–1003), who falls silent while performing the liturgy in the church of St Mark in Alexandria, unable to proceed. Later that night, after regaining the ability to speak, he confesses:

> O my sons, when I lifted up the oblation and before I made the sign of the cross over it, I saw the niche split open and there came forth from it a hand from the top of the vault downwards, and the hand made the sign of the cross over the oblation. Then it was split in my hand, and I was immediately silenced.[45]

45 'Abd al-Masih et al. (1943–1974) vol. 2: 2, 172–174. The medieval church of St Mark does not survive. On the importance of the episode, see also van Moorsel (1986).

These episodes demonstrate the potential of monumental decoration to convey the presence of God in the sanctuary, specifically by means of the apse or east wall, and to inspire visions during the most solemn Christian rites. Although the second miracle is dated to around 1000, it may well have been based on the first miracle, recorded in the middle of the seventh century.

Iconographically, the device of theophany and symbol of divine presence and power is the mandorla, a circle of light or cloud emanating from the figure of Christ, as shown at Mount Sinai, San Venanzio, and Bawit (figs. 12.1 and 12.7).[46] The *doxa* of the Septuagint and New Testament, based on the Hebrew *kabod*, denotes the luminous cloud of divine encounters.[47] With the liturgy focussed on divine confrontation, the realization of divine light was incorporated into liturgical commentaries. In the *Mystagogia* of Maximus the Confessor, all participants, just prior to receiving the sacrament, are said to be 'gazing upon the light of the invisible glory (τῆς δόξης)'.[48] The same line is repeated by Germanus in the *Historia Mystica*. In his own words, he describes the experience of the priest: 'Now the priest … bowing on account of the dreadful … glory (τὴν δόξαν) and brightness (λαμπρότητα) of the Godhead, and contemplating the heavenly liturgy, is initiated even into the splendor (τὴν ἔλλαμψιν) of the life-giving Trinity …'[49] Later in the same chapter, the priest 'sees the divine illumination (τὴν φωτοφάνειαν) [and] … is made radiant (ἐκφαιδρύνεται) by the brightness of the glory (τῇ λαμπρότητι τῆς δόξης) of the face of God …'[50]

To understand why the Virgin Mary enters the sanctuary at Kiti and Livadia, it is necessary to re-examine the apse mosaic at Lythrankomi, where the mandorla surrounds both the Virgin and Child, an iconography that was rarely repeated in Byzantine art (fig. 12.2). A theological explanation for the mandorla was proposed by Marina Sacopoulo, who sees the Virgin and mandorla as respective symbols of the human and divine natures of Christ, constituting a statement of orthodoxy in response to the threat of Monophysitism.[51] Despite the tenuous evidence for the presence of Monophysites in Cyprus in the sixth century, Sacopoulo's interpretation of the mosaic as an expression of

46 According to Grabar (1946) vol. 2, 203, the mandorla is not required for scenes located in heaven or in paradise, only for theophanies, which entail the appearance of God to men on earth. This is echoed by Spieser (2001) 10–11. Set in paradise, the mosaics of Lythrankomi and Sant' Apollinare in Classe must constitute exceptions.

47 Loerke (1981).

48 Max. Conf. *Myst.* 21 in Stead (1982) 96.

49 Germ. Const. *Hist. Myst.* 41 in Meyendorff (1984) 90–93.

50 Germ. Const. *Hist. Myst.* 41 in Meyendorff (1984) 98–99.

51 Sacopoulo (1975) 77–108.

the two natures of Christ as defined at the Council of Chalcedon in 451 need not depend on that evidence. Far from implying the divinity of Mary, as others had asserted before, Sacopoulo argues that the apse mosaic at Lythrankomi is Christological in focus.[52] The Virgin Mary is conceived as an attribute of Christ, as a living symbol of his humanity intended to complement the attribute of the mandorla, which could only convey his divinity. Thus, the earliest surviving apse mosaic of the Virgin and Child attempts a solution, albeit an unsuccessful one, to the problem of representing the hypostatic union of the two natures, unconfused and undivided, in Christ.

In elucidating the orthodox theology of the image, Sacopoulo does not acknowledge the mandorla as a sign of theophany or address the liturgical significance of the mosaic. Much more than the standard image of the Incarnation, the iconography of the Virgin and Child enclosed in a mandorla represents the first manifestation of Christ to man in a non-narrative epiphany, an idea first proposed by André Grabar.[53] As the first human to be sanctified by Christ and thus a model for the faithful, the Virgin is subsumed into the divine radiance, corresponding to the liturgical ideal of Germanus and others. In addition, Pelopidas Stephanou has offered an apocalyptic interpretation of the mosaic, in which the Virgin is assimilated to the woman of Revelation 12: 'And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars.' The palm trees and plants locate the scene in paradise, and the twelve apostles of the upper border signify the twelve stars.[54] If these ideas may be recognized as complementary, then the mosaic at Lythrankomi can be said to epitomize the first and final visions of Christ brought together in the apse. The method of contracting sacred time recalls the apsidal imagery of the Coptic churches,[55] although the Virgin assumes a much greater role at Lythrankomi. In the end, Megaw and Hawkins describe the composition as a failed experiment for its theological implications. Simply stated, the Virgin Mary is not divine and cannot be contained in the divine light of the mandorla.[56] But perhaps the motif was not repeated for

52 These earlier interpretations are summarized in Sacopoulo (1975) 89–91.

53 Grabar (1955) 310–311; Grabar (1946) vol. 2, 225–230; Wellen (1961) 153–154.

54 Stephanou (1979).

55 The Roman apse mosaics explored by Thunø also share this quality: Thunø (2015).

56 Megaw and Hawkins see the mandorla surrounding the Virgin as a consequence of her introduction into the traditional theme of Christ in Glory and explore the mandorla as a formal device, intended to isolate the Virgin and Child from the archangels: Megaw and Hawkins (1977) 76–79. In a later article, Megaw also accepts Stephanou's argument: Megaw (1985) 180–181.

its liturgical implications as well. If the theophany of Christ in the apse is akin to the spiritual vision of God in the Eucharist, then the Virgin Mary cannot be a part of the same vision. The relative success of the projecting footstool at Kiti and Livadia may depend in part on its creation of an alternative vision, one not intended to illustrate or to imitate the ultimate liturgical vision.

What is the nature and purpose of this vision of the Virgin Mary? Specific references to the Virgin are infrequent in the context of the regular Eucharistic liturgies. To be sure, she is named in the Eucharistic Prayer of the liturgy of St Basil as having enabled Christ's work of salvation.[57] In the liturgy of Hagia Sophia, the Virgin is mentioned in the *Monogenes*, the refrain of the introit psalm, introduced by Justinian I in 535/6: 'O only-begotten Son and Word of God, though immortal you condescended for our salvation to take flesh from the holy Theotokos and ever-virgin Mary.'[58] She plays a more central role on the occasions of her feasts, when homilies and hymns were recited in her honour. Yet the mosaics of Cyprus evoke the presence of the Virgin Mary in the sanctuary year round, which is best explained by her role in the Incarnation. The event was recalled in the prayers and stages of the liturgy, especially at the Entrance of the Word, but also forms a parallel to the Eucharist, in which the bread and wine are transformed into the body and blood of Christ. After the entrance of the gifts and immediately prior to the offering, the priest asks for the prayers of his concelebrants. They reply with the text of Luke 1.35, reciting Gabriel's words to Mary at the Annunciation: 'May the Holy Spirit come down upon you, and the power of the Most High overshadow you.'[59] The parallel is further developed by Germanus, who integrates Psalm 109.3 (110.3) into his commentary at the moment of transformation:

> And the priest expounds on the unbegotten God, that is the God and Father, and on the womb which bore the Son before the morning star and before the ages, as it is written: 'Out of the womb before the morning star have I begotten you.' And again the priest asks God to accomplish

57 Brightman (1896) 324–326.

58 Brightman (1896) 365, line 33 to 366, line 9; Taft (1980–1981) 51; Solovey (1970) 173–175. See also 'Monogenes, Ho' in Kazhdan and Talbot (1991), vol. 2, 1397. A commemoration of the Virgin as Theotokos also preceded the diptychs of the dead, read aloud by the deacon during the Eucharist, from the late fifth century: Taft (1991) 100–102.

59 The text of Luke 1.35 is described as the 'primitive kernel' of the dialogue after the entrance of the gifts, ascribed to the Urtext: Taft (1980–1981) 54; Taft (1975) 285–310. It is also connected to the Eucharist by John of Damascus, *De Fide Orthodoxa Lib. IV*, PG 94 col. 1141A. An English translation of the passage appears in Taft (1975) 288–289.

> and bring about the mystery of His Son—that is, that the bread and wine be changed into the body and blood of Christ God—so that it might be fulfilled that 'Today I have begotten you (Psalm 2.7).'[60]

Germanus interprets the text in relation to the Virgin, like the designer of the late seventh-century apse mosaic in the church of the Dormition at Nicaea, where the psalm was inscribed above the central image of the Virgin and Child.[61] Much later, the association between the Eucharist and the Incarnation inspired the representation of the Annunciation above the entrance to the sanctuary of Byzantine churches.[62] The separation of Mary and Gabriel on the spandrels of the transverse arch allowed the Holy Spirit to enter and descend between them into the space of the sanctuary during the celebration of the liturgy. The interpretation of the Eucharist as another incarnation may therefore have inspired the visions of the Virgin in Cyprus, if not the appearance of the Virgin and Child more generally in the apse.

The projecting footstool may also be understood as an intercessory motif, establishing the real presence of the Virgin in relation to a divine and distant Christ, who no longer appears in his mature form in the apse at Kiti, and may or may not have appeared as a diminutive figure above the apse at Livadia.[63] At Livadia in particular, the motif is used in combination with other features identifying the Virgin as an intercessor (fig. 12.5a–b). She appears alone, in an attitude of prayer, and stands before a gold background arranged in a rising

60 Germ. Const. *Hist. Myst.* 41 in Meyendorff (1984) 96–97; Bornert (1966) 174–175.

61 Barber (1991). The figures were restored after iconoclasm in the ninth century: Underwood (1959).

62 Woodfin (2012) 98–101. The metaphorical significance of the placement of the Annunciation at the entrance to the sanctuary is emphasized by Varalis (1996–1997); Maguire (2012) 140. On other images of the Virgin in liturgical contexts, see Galavaris (1979) 110–114; Jolivet-Lévy (1991) 336–341.

63 The mosaic at Kiti did not extend beyond the apse conch, and no tesserae were found above the apse at Livadia. Megaw assumes the presence of Christ in the latter because the Virgin is pictured alone: Megaw (1976) 27. At Lythrankomi, mosaic fragments from a vertical surface were discovered below the floor of the sanctuary. Some of these fragments contained gold tesserae set at an angle, a technique also found on the east walls of Sinai and Poreč. The composition cannot be reconstructed, but Megaw and Hawkins consider the Ascension type of Christ the most likely subject, based on the sixth-century tapestry of the Virgin and Child in the Cleveland Museum: Megaw and Hawkins (1977) 38, 84. I question the need for another theophanic vision conveyed by a mandorla, but concede that the adult Christ is a distinct possibility.

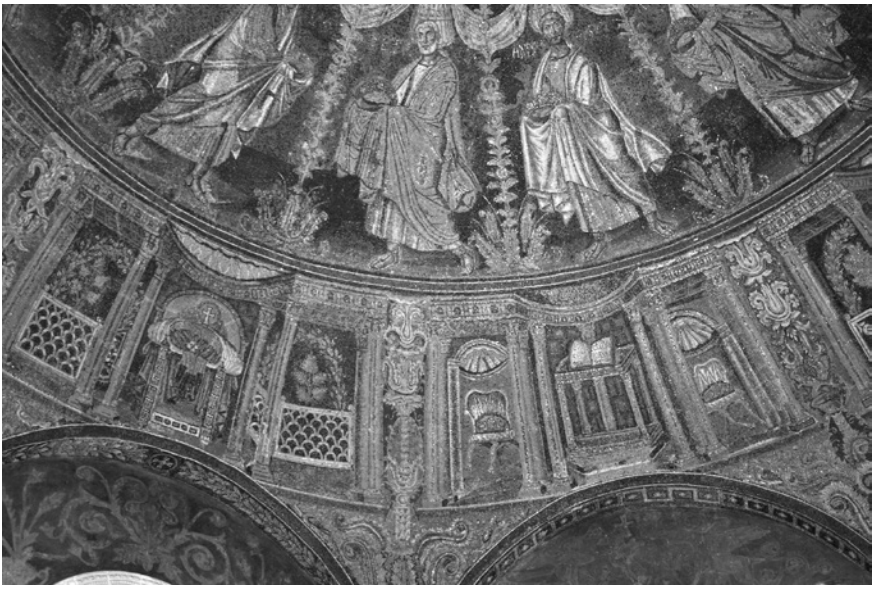


FIGURE 12.8 *Ravenna, Orthodox Baptistery, vault mosaic.*
SOURCE: ALYSON WHARTON.

scale pattern. Associated with common gates and screens in secular and sacred contexts, the pattern creates a spatial plane between heaven and earth, which the Virgin occupies and indeed crosses for the sake of the local Christian community. In the vault mosaics of the Orthodox Baptistery at Ravenna (451–473), an openwork screen of this type delimits the garden of paradise (fig. 12.8). Located on the principal axis below the baptism of Christ, the scale pattern is one of three detailed patterns used to distance the flowering trees on either side of the prepared throne, which is depicted four times in the vault's lower register. Likewise, a fifth-century tomb from the eastern cemetery of Thessalonike depicts the story of Susanna and the Elders from the Book of Daniel.[64] The scene takes place in a garden, signified by trees, behind a large enclosure in imitation stone. Joined by posts at the four corners, the fictive slabs are decorated with latticework and imbricated scales. In a funerary context, the garden of Susanna is likened to the garden of paradise, with the gates serving as a boundary between this world and the next.

64 Marke (2006) 185–187, 224, figs. 22, 141–142, pls. 24a, 67a. In plate 24a, the tomb is mistakenly identified as coming from the western cemetery. See also cat. no. 41 in Kourkoutidou-Nicolaidou (1997).

Low in height, the garden screens pictured in Ravenna and Thessalonike resemble chancel screens and other partitions used in early Christian churches. Before the development of the Byzantine *iconostasis* from the eleventh century onwards, chancel screens made of wood, stone, or metalwork marked the boundary between the nave and the sanctuary, which the *Mystagogia* effectively compares to the boundary between earth and heaven. Several stone panels with the scale pattern in relief and openwork have been discovered in Cyprus, for example at Kourion, Hagios Philon, and Amathous.[65] More telling perhaps, the designer of a sixth-century floor mosaic from an unknown site in Syria (now in the National Museum of Denmark) imagined the grille of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem to have such a pattern (fig. 12.9).[66] The openwork screen is one of the most prominent features of the shrine as depicted in the mosaic, along with the conical dome of the aedicula.

Applied as an all-over pattern, the imbricated scales at Livadia create a blanket or abstract screen, a concept which probably originated in Byzantine floor mosaics. A common pattern from the fourth to seventh centuries represents a floral network set in imbricated scales with or without outlines. Multiple examples survive from churches in Cyprus, including the sixth-century mosaics in the atrium of the Basilica of Chrysopolitissa in Paphos (fig. 12.10). The pavements probably represent schematic views of enclosed gardens, like that glimpsed through the openwork screen of the Orthodox Baptistery in Ravenna.[67] Some support for this interpretation is provided by the Syrian floor mosaic of the Holy Sepulchre mentioned above (fig. 12.9). Although the columns of the aedicula are visible behind the screen, the scales are also inscribed with rosettes. Regardless of whether the mosaicist intended the rosettes to be read as part of the openwork design, he appears to have modelled the screen on floor mosaics of the type found in Paphos. The artist therefore understood the scale pattern to function as a gate or screen, even in the context of an all-over floral network.

Like an openwork screen, therefore, the scaled background at Livadia admits the golden light of heaven but erects a barrier, impeding access to God and affirming the need for intercession, newly personified in the figure of the orant Virgin Mary.[68] The placement of the Virgin at the threshold finds parallel in contemporary miracle stories written in Palestine. Derek Krueger

65 Megaw et al. (2007) 215, nos. K41–42, fig. 5.3f, pl. 5.11q; Du Plat Taylor and Megaw (1981) 231, no. 24, fig. 52d; Aupert (1978) 941–942, fig. 3.

66 Bouras and Parani (2008) 28, fig. 27.

67 Cf. Maguire (2012) 46, 97–98.

68 On the distancing and dwindling of paradise in Byzantine art, see Maguire (2002); Maguire (2012) 92–98, esp. 97–98 on the abstraction of paradise before and during iconoclasm using latticework.



FIGURE 12.9 *Syria, floor mosaic: Holy Sepulchre.*
SOURCE: NATIONAL MUSEUM OF DENMARK.



FIGURE 12.10 *Paphos, Basilica of Chrysopolitissa, atrium, floor mosaic.* SOURCE: B. SHILLING.

analyzes three episodes in which the Virgin serves as a guardian or protector of sacred space, regulating and facilitating access to holy places through her miraculous appearances.[69] In addition, the screen at Livadia visualizes the

69 Krueger (2011). Two of these episodes come from the *Spiritual Meadow* and the *Life of Mary of Egypt*. The third episode comes from the *Miracles of the Theotokos at the Monastery of Choziba* by Antony of Choziba.

liminal space that she occupies between earth and heaven, the human and the divine, recalling certain metaphors of the Virgin in early Byzantine homilies and hymns. The famous Akathistos Hymn praises her as the 'celestial ladder by which God descended' (3.10: κλῖμαξ), the 'bridge leading those from earth to heaven' (3.11: γέφυρα), the 'opener of the gates of paradise' (7.9: ἀνοικτήριον), the 'door of hallowed mystery' (15.7: θύρα), the 'key to the kingdom of Christ' (15.16: κλεὶς), and the 'gate of salvation' (19.7: πύλη).[70] All six of these metaphors emphasize the liminality of the Virgin; five support the interpretation of the gate at Livadia as the gate of paradise, heaven, or salvation, while one hails the Virgin as the guardian of the Eucharist, the hallowed mystery. Writing in the fifth century, Hesychius of Jerusalem also presents the Virgin as the closed doors (θυρῶν κεκλεισμένων) through which Christ passed in the Gospel of John (20.19) and the closed gate (πύλην κεκλεισμένην) of Ezekiel (44.1–2) in the East, the location of paradise and the rising sun, which enabled the entry of the King, the only-begotten, and the true light.[71]

At Kiti, the dramatic placement of the footstool establishes the Virgin as an intercessor, even without the explicit gesture of prayer and the abstract screen (figs. 12.3–4). Located in the most exalted space of the church, prior to the addition of the medieval dome, the vision of the Virgin and Child serves as a substitute for the theophany of Christ, which remains accessible only in the minds of the purest participants. This mystical image inspired the mind to divine contemplation without reproducing a vision that demands essential spiritual preparation. The exhortation inscribed on the floor of the church of the Virgin at Madaba in Jordan (767) seems especially well-suited to the apse mosaic at Kiti and may have pointed to a similar mosaic in the apse: 'Looking on Mary the Virgin Mother of God and on Christ whom she bore, king of all, only son of the only God, purify your mind and your flesh and your works.'[72] With no evidence for an image of the divine Christ at Kiti and also perhaps at Livadia, I would suggest that the vision of the Virgin originated as an alternative vision in the apse, and later became a complementary vision as the figure of Christ Pantokrator was introduced to the dome of the middle Byzantine church.

In early Christian churches, clerical and non-clerical viewers were initially encouraged to make connections between the live performance of the

70 Peltomaa (2001) 4–5, 8–9, 12–13, 16–17. I have translated ἀνοικτήριον as 'opener' instead of 'key' and θύρα as 'door' instead of 'gate'. The Virgin is also called the one 'through whom paradise is opened' (15.15).

71 Hom. 5.2.19–29 in Aubineau (1978–1980) vol. 1, 160–163. John of Damascus also calls her the 'gateway of light' in a homily on the Nativity of Mary: Cunningham (2008) 65.

72 English translation in Maguire (2012) 38–39; Piccirillo (1993) 64–65.

sacrament and the eternal vision of God revealed on the apse wall. However, an emphasis on the divinity of Christ in apse decoration led to the foregrounding of intermediaries.[73] This is clearly expressed in the double-zoned apses of San Venanzio and Bawit, where saints and the Virgin occupy the lower zone. I would suggest that those responsible for the mosaics at Kiti and Livadia took foregrounding to a new level and devised the Virgin's miraculous descent and entry into the church. Although a seemingly minor feature, the projecting footstool fulfills many functions: it establishes hierarchy within the composition; it contributes to the formation of a distinctly sacred space by invoking the presence of a holy figure; and it promotes the real presence of the Virgin or Virgin and Child as a parallel to the Eucharistic vision and a substitute for an increasingly remote, unapproachable, and divine Christ, still located in the east, but far beyond the apse wall.

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General Index

The general index contains references to a selection of objects, concepts, places and names relevant to the present volume. In addition to the titles and the subtitles of the chapters it offers readers a guide to the main arguments discussed in the various parts. References to words occurring very frequently (e.g. threshold, door, gate, sanctuary, epigraphy, inscriptions, ritual) and precise indications of passages cited (e.g. from the Old and New Testament, classical and late antique authors) are not listed here—except for the entry 'sanctuary, definition'.

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